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OF R. ASSAGIOLI
YEAR XXXIX
APRIL 2024 N. 41



PSYCHOSYNTHESIS

EDITORIAL

Translated by
Gordon Leonard Symons

Dear readers,

I enthusiastically accept the leadership baton left by Patrizia Bonacina and above all her best wishes for the continuation of this magazine.

I sincerely thank Patrizia for all her efforts over the years, all the friends of the editorial staff who have collaborated with her and those who will continue on this adventure with new companions.

In fact, new working committees have been established that will collaborate in the creation of the magazine and which I would like to present to you:

- *Editorial committee: Luisa Bertolatti, Simona Cattabiani, Sergio Guarino, Lina Malfiore, Gaetano Palumbo, Laura Rodighiero*
- *Scientific Committee: Marcello Aragona, Piermaria Bonacina, Sergio Guarino, Gaetano Palumbo, Donatella Randazzo, Maurizio Re, Gordon Symons*
- *Translators: Greta Bianchi, Achille Cattaneo, Alberto Gabba, Damiano Pagani e Gordon Symons.*

Our editorial intention is to continue along the line that has led us to date and, if possible, to broaden the scope of the magazine so that it can reach more readers, include more and more international fields and continue to develop topics of interest to all of us.

The magazine can be an opportunity to re-examine some themes, a special space where we can deal with the contents of psychosynthesis and everyday life, allows for insights and reflections that can help us have a better understanding of ourselves, of others and world events.

This magazine belongs to all of us who read it and it will be of great importance to receive your comments, suggestions and indications on what you would like to be explored in greater depth.

Enjoy your reading.

Laura Uliana

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Magazine of Self-training, education,
interpersonal and social relations.

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Cover "Ship With Butterfly Sails" - Salvador Dali

We would like to inform those who send writings to the editor the following settings:

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NEWS FROM THE ASSAGIOLI ARCHIVE



Translated by Alberto Gabba/ Gordon Leonard Symons

The appointment with the Assagioli archive is now a recurring one. In the magazine we read some pages of Roberto Assagioli's spiritual diaries, notes, letters and documents that come from the past.

We would like to enrich the history of this archive with some more information.

As Laura Ferrea will tell us later, the precious material of the archive has been enhanced and made available for consultation thanks to the collaboration of volunteers from the world of psychosynthesis.

Over the years the archive has become an increasingly attractive magnet for many: for those doing research, for those doing training and in-depth studies in Psychosynthesis. The appointment for the international Psychosynthesis meetings, organized by the Group alle Fonti has also been consolidated. The Group welcomes friends who come from all over the world, to meet in the rooms of the Institute of Psychosynthesis to leaf through and discover treasures in the cardboard folders, still tied with cloth ribbons.⁽¹⁾

For many, the first impact with the rich collection of Assagioli's manuscripts is to still feel the profuse energy and this is confirmed by the testimonies of those who have experienced it.

This happens every time Casa Assagioli opens its doors to visitors, thus expanding the breath of the archive that still speaks to us.

The great work dedicated to the archive is rewarded by surprises and encounters, revelations and connections with other historical archives of illustrious figures with whom Assagioli came into contact during his long life.

And so it was recently. During the last congress held in Padua on 14-15 October 2023, Carolina Montessori, great-granddaughter and curator of Maria Montessori's archive, entertained us with an interesting and lively talk on the existing relationships between Maria Montessori and Roberto Assagioli through manuscripts and correspondence between them, a part of which is preserved in the Assagioli archive.⁽²⁾

Then, the Hungarian researcher Zsuzsanna Tóth-Izsó, who had crossed the threshold of via San Domenico to consult the archive for her own research on the relationship between Assagioli and Papini, promoted together with Lucia Bassignana - trainer and lecturer of the School of Group Leadership and Counselling of the Institute of Psychosynthesis - a conference at the Italian Cultural Institute in Budapest "Assagioli 2021. Psychosynthesis and literature". Following this meeting, an intense relationship developed with a Hungarian group for which the Institute organized training in Psychosynthesis abroad with lecturers from the Institute.

Here is therefore a taste of the direct and indirect implications that the Assagioli archive moves in terms of opportunities, which can then also be maintained and expanded by consulting the archive material, which is also online: www.archivioassagioli.org.

The work is made possible by the willingness of volunteers who fall in love with the special atmosphere of this *still-living* material and lend themselves to making it available and accessible to all those who might be attracted by it.

Like Roberto Assagioli, the archive speaks many languages: mainly Italian and English but much correspondence and documentation can be found in German and French. Even today, as in the past, there

are voluntary collaborators from other countries who participate in this adventure.

The archive has this strength within itself: it enriches and nourishes those who access it.

Laura Ferrea, current head of the Assagioli Archive, below gives us some background about the history of the archive from its origins up to the present day, the material found and protected, the people who contributed to the cataloguing and scanning of all this precious material left by Roberto Assagioli.

The Assagioli Archive contains a considerable amount of documents produced by Roberto Assagioli during his lifetime.

6 The handwritten notes, amounting to approximately 19,000, make up an important section, preserved in his study and therefore called the “Study Archive”. They are mostly very short texts, notes in which Assagioli recorded his reflections on the fly, notes for an article, a lecture or a conference, short excerpts from texts by other authors to quote in his own writings. He would write them on tiny sheets of paper of varying sizes, mostly printer’s cuttings, but also on the back of used and no longer valid papers, on old letterheads, and even on the back side of World War II ration cards. Piero Ferrucci, his close collaborator in the last years, remembers that after having quickly written them down, he would put them in a desk drawer to put them away and use them later; and that he actually did so is testified by the numerous folders that collected them, with the indication of the subject written in his own hand. The various collaborators who followed one another over time certainly contributed to arranging them, but a complete organization of the manuscripts into categories was only achieved after his death, in the 1980s, by Piero Ferrucci.

The complete texts of all of Roberto Assagioli’s writings, both those published in print and those in typescript, are collected in a metal filing cabinet with the suggestive name of “Synthesis Cabinet”, another significant section of the Archive which counts around 2,000 documents. They bear testimony to the great writing activity of

Assagioli, who published few books during his lifetime, but many articles in various journals, and whose many lectures dealing with the fundamental concepts of Psychosynthesis also remain.

The arrangement of these documents is mainly due to Ida Palombi, who worked alongside Assagioli for many years and then succeeded him as President of the Institute of Psychosynthesis until 1981; they are arranged alphabetically based on the title and to her we owe the recovery of many writings that had been lost and the constant care in maintaining the integrity of the filing cabinet.

The rest of the material preserved in the Archive is collected under the name of “Archivio alle fonti”. It was in a state of great disarray when in 2006, at the end of the renovation of the building where Assagioli once lived and which now houses the Institute of Psychosynthesis, a group of members of the Institute, the *Group alle Fonti*, began to take care of it. The reorganization of these documents is still continuing and is the occasion of interesting discoveries, such as the unpublished 1910 letter from Giovanni Papini to Assagioli on the occasion of his graduation, published in this same magazine⁽³⁾.

The creation of an online site dedicated to the Archive was also initiated to make it available to a wider public, so that it would be easily consulted even remotely for those who could not travel to Florence in person, although direct contact with the writings and with Casa Assagioli remains a very significant experience. The site has been online since 2015 and the work of scanning and cataloguing the documents is still ongoing. First, the inclusion of the manuscripts of the Studio Archive was completed, also using the numerous scans carried out in the 1990s by Sandro Maneschi, and in recent times the Synthesis Cabinet was also made fully available online.

It should be emphasized that this achievement is the result of the combined action of the many people who, over time and with various tasks, have taken turns in looking after the Archive, a chain of people united by their passion for the Roberto Assagioli’s work and its dissemination.

Using the Archive website is very easy. From the home page www.archivioassagioli.org, which is bilingual in



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Italian and English, one can access information on the history of the Archive, a concise exposition of the life of Roberto Assagioli and a complete bibliography of his publications, as well as a collection of writings on his person. To consult the individual documents, a simple registration is required, free of charge, with the insertion of a few details and subsequent activation by clicking on a link sent by email.

Once in the reserved area it is possible to view the documents in two ways. In “Explore” the real experience of accessing the Archive is reproduced, with the opening of folders and files that correspond to the existing ones and the possibility of browsing through the documents one after the other, as one would do if one were actually there; the guide and the lists at the top of the page provide help in finding one’s way around in the consultation. In “Search”, on the other hand, it is possible to limit the display of documents according to one’s interests, either by entering only the words or phrases to be searched for in “Quick Search” or by supplementing them with other elements to better define the area of investigation

in “Advanced Search”. In both cases one will obtain a detailed list, which can be browsed document by document.

Laura Ferrea

Assagioli’s archive Responsible

Notes

1. see articles by Donatella Randazzo and Theo Dijkman in this magazine.
2. Maria Montessori and Roberto Assagioli: Parallels in their thinking.
3. Letter of papini to Assagioli.

LETTER OF PAPINI TO ASSAGIOLI

Pieve S. Stefano (Arezzo)

28.VII.1910

Dear Roberto,

Forgive me if I didn't write to congratulate you immediately, not for your degree (as that was inevitable and everyone goes through it) but for your liberation. So far, partly due to obligatory schoolwork and partly due to the natural scattered curiosity of adolescence, you haven't shown what you can do, and you haven't measured the extent of your mind and creativity. Now, however, you are a man (or beginning to be one) – in compliance with both school and society. You are free, you are rich, you can travel, you can study as much as you want: it's time to see what you're worth and where you will end up.

You're heading in the right direction: delving into the study of the human soul is one of the most beautiful and crucial pursuits, and you're well aware of my shared enthusiasm for certain guiding principles. (I hope the Philosophical Library remains not solely historical but maintains an investigative spirit, exploring possibilities and new avenues.) Given your psychological background and openness to the aspirations of visionary pioneers, and at times, genuine prophets, you have the potential to achieve a great deal. I'm unsure of your plans upon your return to Florence, but it's definite that you'll have ample time for your pursuits and interests.

I am working on that internal novel I told you about and also on a philosophical book titled "The Other Half." I am doing well here: the weather is beautiful (only 20 degrees) and favorable. Greet your family and write to me.

Always yours, Giovanni

(Papini's letter transcript)

Translated by Greta Bianchi/ Gordon Leonard Symons

This letter, recently found among the extensive collection of Assagioli's papers, comes to light 25 years after the publication of the "Assagioli, Papini, Prezzolini Correspondence" of 1998, which I co-edited with Dr. Manuela Scotti for the Roman Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, now long out of print.

Assagioli had moved with his family to Florence in 1903 from Venice, his hometown, due to the lack of a university there. He enrolled in the medical degree program at the Florentine Institute of Higher Studies, then assimilated to the universities, graduating in 1910 with a pioneering thesis titled "La psicoanalisi" (Psychoanalysis). While directly related to Freud's theories, the research also drew on the works of Bleuler and Jung, conducted mainly at the Burghölzli psychiatric hospital:

"In a few days, I will leave for Zurich, where I will stay until the end of September, working on my interesting thesis on psychopathology (on Freud's theories, etc.) at the mental hospital" (letter to Papini, August 27, 1909).

Perfectly integrated into Florence's multifaceted cultural milieu at the beginning of the century, Assagioli, a life scientist oriented towards psychiatry, engaged in this world as a scholar open to the most innovative voices in European and non-European psychology. An important contribution to his formation came from spiritualistic activities, mystic-philosophical discussions around the Philosophical Library and later around the Circle of Philosophy, of which he was a frequent and active participant. Assagioli brought with him to the Florentine cultural context a wealth of experiences from his study trips and intense contacts with the new European and non-European psychological culture. Besides his interest in every practical application of psychology, he was the

first in Italy to delve into Freud's theories and practical applications of psychoanalysis. He was also passionate about other fields of philosophical thought, particularly Eastern philosophy, Arab Sufism, theosophy, and mysticism – anything related to and involving human spirituality. If this is the most significant aspect of Assagioli's intellectual culture, it must be added that he contributed constructively to the avant-garde action carried out in the Florentine journals "Leonardo" and "La Voce" by his two friends, Papini and Prezzolini.

The recently discovered letter is part of the correspondence between Assagioli and Giovanni Papini, covering the period from 1904 to 1912. Intended to retrace the history of a friendship, the correspondence testifies to its rapid consummation, revealing not only an affinity for cultural interests but also a surprising intimacy. The correspondence with Giuseppe Prezzolini, representing the second part of the correspondence, is emotionally more distant, perhaps because it is more conditioned by practical-economic interests and not without ironic and polemical content.

It is not my intention to dwell on the roles that Papini and Prezzolini were assuming in those years in the context of Italian culture, extensively studied through historical-literary research. The figure of Assagioli, on the other hand, appears rather subdued, almost in the background, although his name circulated, even in more restricted circles, due to the innovative scope of his work. His new "psychagogy," as he called it, with an evident reference to the Platonic term, was now presented by him at conferences and in articles in major journals, where the basic concepts of his future psychosynthesis were clearly outlined. However, his letters reveal a youthful yet mature image of him, active in another field—the vibrant cultural environment of early twentieth-century Florence. Above all, they disclose the not negligible role he played "within the restless realm of the literary avant-garde that had formed around the Florentine magazines of the early twentieth century."

The letter, discovered through the meticulous and precious ongoing reorganization of Assagioli's papers, is one of the few exchanged between the two in 1910, a

testament to a relationship that had been thinning and had begun to fade a few years earlier due to disagreements, never fully clarified, about the end of the "Leonardo" magazine in 1907. The letter still carries a friendly tone and a veiled, never confessed intimacy from the past. However, it should be placed in the context of the end of a friendship, where youthful enthusiasm and affection gradually waned, completely fading shortly thereafter.

The signs of this rupture are already evident in a letter almost a year earlier, dated September 7, 1909, from Pieve S. Stefano, in response to one from Assagioli who was in Zurich preparing his thesis. Papini addresses him with an ambiguous yet overt and acknowledged preachy tone. It's a paternalistic tone mixed with a sort of unconscious downplaying of his friend, a resistance to the psychic inner solicitations that Assagioli carried due to his studies, which were unsettling him to the core of his soul. For Papini, it was better not to risk getting involved in a precarious situation and to distance himself, reaffirming the preeminence of his role in the safer context of what had been what had been at the time of "Leonardo" and "La Voce" magazine:

"I hope your stay in Zurich is not just to dazzle your future judges but genuinely benefits your professional growth and the development of your spirit. You have chosen the science closest to the soul and its mysterious and fearful problems, and I hope you haven't chosen it for reasons of expediency or superficial sympathy but with the firm intention of discovering and at least playing a part in the much that there is to discover and do. For heaven's sake! What a preachy tone this letter takes!"

On his part, Assagioli is now entirely oriented towards his scientific work and the formulation of his innovative psychological theories, which are leading him on a front far from what characterized the years of his youth. This is evident from his response:

"Thank you for your serious words regarding my scientific studies, which demonstrate that you continue to be genuinely interested in my activity. I can assure you that I certainly did not choose my current studies for reasons of expediency; they will indeed bring me many difficulties and struggles in the scientific field. I chose

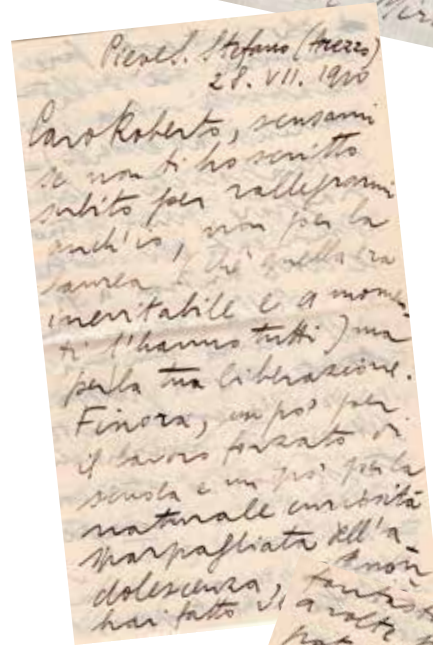
them because they seemed and still seem to me the most apt to satisfy my compelling need to know the mysteries of the human soul and to use such knowledge for the liberation of souls.”

In conclusion, this letter fills one of the by no means few gaps in the correspondence and fits between two of Assagioli's letters sent to Papini. The first is an excerpt dated July 15, 1910, from Gressoney-La Trinité:

“I am here to rest after the tour-de-force (7 exams in 22 days) successfully completed to become a doctor (!) or rather to be free to work on my own.”

The second is the direct response (August 6, 1910, from Gressoney-La Trinité) to Papini's recently acquired letter:

“I am very grateful for your encouragement. Both severe and affectionate at the same time. They remind me of those you used to give me some time ago, which were truly precious (I take this opportunity to ask you never to spare me future warnings and even reproaches if you deem them appropriate: I may not find them correct, but I will be grateful in any case for the good will that prompted them). You will understand that, given the nature of my studies (the human soul in its known and unknown aspects and possibilities), it will be a long time before I publicly disclose the results I hope to achieve. What I will publish for a few years will certainly not be the most important part of my studies. First of all, I will prepare a volume on psychoanalysis (expanding and redoing my thesis). Then, I will publish something on psychotherapy (on which I may make a presentation at the next congress of the Society of Psychology). But above all, I will try to practice psychotherapy, from which I expect great benefit for the patients and valuable observations and experiments for myself.”



LAMA GOVINDA

REVIEWS "THE ACT OF WILL"

In the spirit of World Psychosynthesis Day and Roberto Assagioli's urgent call "*to establish Spiritual 'Airways' between nations, institutions, movements and continents ...*", we would like establish connections between our magazine and other publishing entities that also focus on psychosynthesis.

In this issue, we refer to Catherine Ann Lombard's blog: *Love and Will - A psychosynthesis approach to living* (LoveAndWill.com)

Catherine has already collaborated with our magazine and the Istituto di Psicosintesi has published some of her work, most recently her translation of Assagioli's *Psicosintesi: Per l'armonia della vita (Creating Harmony in Life)*.

She also volunteers in Assagioli's archives at Casa Assagioli. You may read more about her at by clicking here (<https://loveandwill.com/about/>).

Among her numerous published articles, we have chosen one that draws its inspiration from her work in Assagioli's archive. This excerpt talks about Roberto Assagioli's meeting with Lama Govinda more than fifty years ago and Lama Govinda's review of *The Act of Will*.

You can read the article in full on Catherine's blog Lama Govinda Reviews "The Act of Will" (<https://loveandwill.com/2023/09/16/lama-govinda-reviews-the-act-of-will/>).

Enjoy your reading!

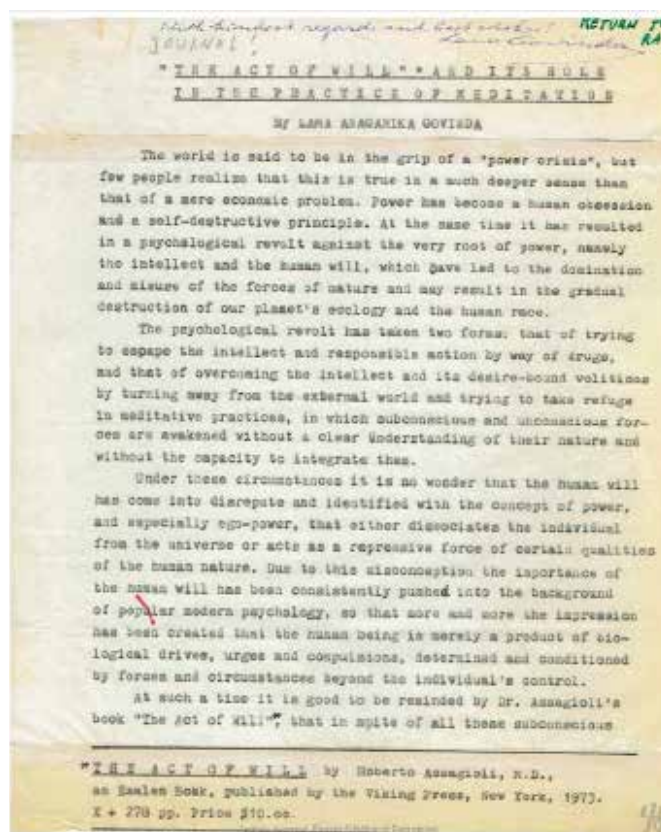
A few years ago while working in Assagioli's archives, I found an interesting document. It is a review by Lama Anagarika Govinda (1898-1985) of Roberto Assagioli's book *The Act of Will*. Govinda's review starts out with this very powerful statement, which can apply today as much as it did more than 50 years ago:

The world is said to be in the grip of a "power crisis", but few people realize that this is true in a much deeper sense than that of a mere economic problem. Power has become a human obsession and a self-destructive principle. At the same time it has resulted in a psychological revolt against the very root of power, namely the intellect and the human will, which have led to the domination and misuse of the forces of nature and may result in the gradual destruction of our planet's ecology and the human race.

(Lama Anagarika Govinda)

On the top margin of the first page of this typewritten review is a handwritten note by Lama Govinda to Assagioli: "With kindest regards and best wishes! Lama Govinda"

On the bottom margin of the last page, there is the



following handwritten note:

“Copy sent to the Editor *Psychosynthesis Journal*, San Francisco”

Govinda and Assagioli's Meeting

In his autobiography, Piero Ferrucci (<http://pieroferucci.it/indra.html>) writes about the two men's meeting which took place in Castiglioncello, Tuscany, in August 1972. Here is a brief excerpt:

“At one time Assagioli achieved a degree of fame overseas, far more than in Italy, and various people came to meet him. Lama Govinda came while Assagioli was spending a few days at Castiglioncello on the Tirrenian coast. Lama Govinda had written books on Tibetan Buddhism, and had made available to the western public its forgotten teachings. Assagioli and Lama Govinda were puny, frail old men with white beards and an air of wisdom about them.

His meeting with Assagioli was a great piece of theatre. Lama Govinda was slowly climbing a staircase with friends, Assagioli was waiting at the top and began going down the stairs to meet him.

He had asked me: “Should I greet him the Oriental way, with hands clasped, or the Western way, with a handshake?” A fair question, seeing as Lama Govinda was actually a German scholar transplanted in the East. I said he should greet him with hands clasped. When the meeting took place, Assagioli gave him the Oriental greeting, but Lama Govinda extended his hand. So Assagioli started to give him his hand, but meanwhile Lama Govinda had decided to greet with hands clasped. It looked like a strange ritual: East meets West.

“The conversation began and Lama Govinda pointed out that the concept of will in psychosynthesis was similar to that of the Buddhist virya, inner strength. After a while the two asked to be left alone... Sometime later the two of them came back looking radiant and resembling each other even more.”

Piero Ferrucci



Above are two photos of the two “puny, frail men with white beards.” I am not certain, but perhaps these photos are the ones mentioned by Lama Govinda.

Unfortunately, Govinda's review was never published by the *Psychosynthesis Journal*. However, a slightly edited version was published posthumously in *The Lost Teachings of Lama Govinda: Living Wisdom from a Modern Tibetan Master*, edited by Richard Power, foreword by Lama Surya Das. Quest Books, 2007.

What I found most interesting are Govinda's definitions of the Transpersonal Will and Universal Will.

PEACE



14

Translated by Gordon Leonard Symons

Perhaps never before has Humanity been so deprived of peace. To see this, it is enough to observe what is happening around us: open or hidden struggles everywhere, repercussions of the war and threats for the future; struggles of nations, races, classes and parties, but also, and no less, struggles, agitations and storms in the depths of souls, which manifest themselves in many ways: emotional, moral and religious crises; dissatisfied with ourselves and others; rebellion against society, against the family, against life and God himself.

In such a world, cultivating peace is not a spiritual luxury, but a daily necessity for all those who want to maintain their internal integrity, and not allow themselves to be overwhelmed by collective currents of agitation, panic or violence. And cultivating peace is also, and no less, a duty towards others. Whoever knows how to be a living center of peace now, who knows how to radiate it powerfully and ceaselessly around himself, brings poor humanity the good of which it is perhaps most deprived and which it needs most.

Let's see how we can do this in the most efficient way.

Let us remember first of all, as a warning and an incitement, that all the great spiritual Masters have

insisted in a particular way on Peace. Indian religious texts begin and end with the formula: "Om - shanti - shanti - shanti" (Om - peace - peace - peace); or with the other: "Peace to all beings." The Buddha taught, by word and example, the sublime peace of the spirit. Of Him it is said: "The Awakened One is Peace to himself and brings peace to the whole world." In the descriptions of the different degrees of Buddhist contemplations, one of the most accentuated notes is the serenity of the contemplating soul.

In original Christianity and then in its highest and purest manifestations throughout the centuries, the note of peace often resonates. The figure of Christ is surrounded by an atmosphere of Peace: "Peace on earth to men of good will". He often made peace; he calmed the storm, he tirelessly calmed the minds of the disciples who were fearful, or disputed among themselves for supremacy, or, like Peter, were violent in reacting. Finally, he left them a message of spiritual peace which has a profound meaning: « I give you my Peace; I give it to you not as the world gives it." (John, XIV v27).

In Christian mysticism, perfect internal peace which is called "quiet" or "quiet prayer", constitutes a well-defined and elevated stage in the ascent of the soul to God. That Peace, that internal silence, in which all thoughts and feelings of the personality, is considered as an indispensable preparation for mystical union, for full communion of the Soul with God.

Let us remember the beautiful description of Peace given by the *Imitation of Christ*: "Firm peace, imperturbable and sure peace, internal and external peace, stable peace on every side". (Book II, Ch. 40, n. 3).

Even in other spiritual writings the value of peace is highlighted. One of the precepts of the *Light on the Path* says: "... desire Peace fervently" — and another declares: "The Peace you will desire is that sacred Peace which nothing can disturb and in which the soul grows like the holy flower on the placid lagoons".

Let's see how we can meditate to achieve Peace.

It is useful to begin by broadening our internal horizon as much as possible, turning our thoughts to consideration, to contemplation of the Infinite and the Eternal. We remember and realize that we are spiritual beings, and that our spiritual essence is indestructible.

This broadening of perspective will help us to re-establish true proportions, to see the relative insignificance of many contingent things by which we usually allow ourselves to be disturbed and agitated. So little by little we will begin to truly feel the Peace of the Eternal, the Peace of the Spirit, the Peace that Christ called "My Peace".

For those who find this meditation difficult, we can suggest another method, based on the use of images; but the two methods can be appropriately associated, forming two stages of the same meditation. Various images can be used for this purpose and, depending on the various temperaments and psychological types, one may be more suggestive than the other.

The first is the one evoked by the phrase from the *Light on the Path* just quoted: we can imagine a large expanse of water, a blue sky, a shining sun, and on the calm surface of the water myriads of lotus flowers opening to the sun's rays.

Another suggestive image is that of the scene told in the *Gospel of St. Mark*, in which Jesus calms the storm:

« On the same day, towards evening, Jesus said to them: "Let us cross over to the other side". After sending the crowd away, they took Him away in the boat He was in and there were also other boats with Him.

A great whirlwind arose, and the waves rushed onto the boat so that it was already filling up. He, Jesus, was sleeping in the stern with his head on the cushion. They woke Him up and said to Him, "Master, are you not worried that we will perish?" Having awakened, He rebuked the wind and said to the sea: "Peace! Be still." The wind ceased and there was a great calm." (*Mark, IV, 35-40*).

A third suitable image could be that of our terrestrial globe in the infinite vastness of celestial spaces, as evoked by the magnificent verses of Federico Amiel, which with their calm and solemn rhythm constitute an excellent means of evoking peace:

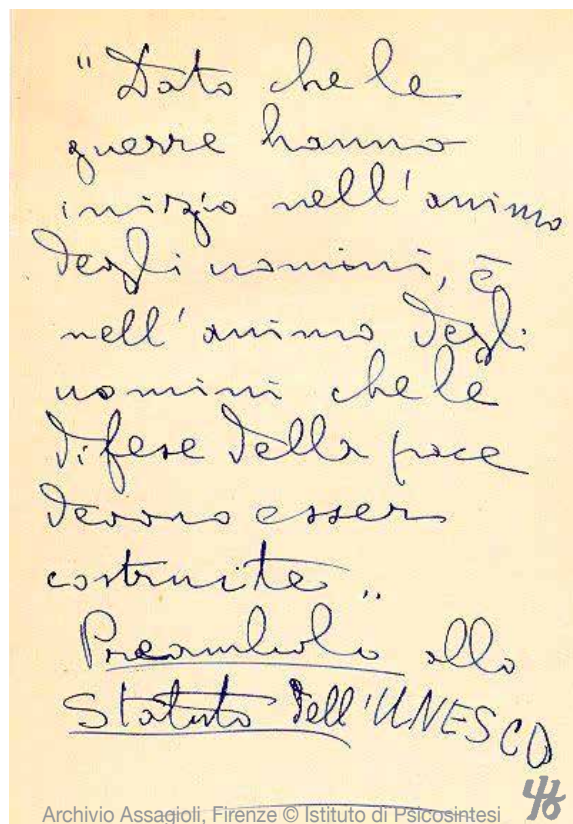
« Dans l'éternel azur de l'insoluble espace
s'enveloppe de Paix notre globe agité.

Homme, envelope ainsi tes jours, rêve qui passe
du calme firmament de ton éternité ».

With the help of these images, elevating the soul towards the radiant, supreme Reality, let us begin to feel and realize Peace.

Roberto Assagioli

15



Archivio Assagioli, Firenze © Istituto di Psicossintesi

“Given that wars began in the soul: of men, it is in the souls of men that defence of peace must be built.”
Preamble to the constitution of UNESCO



ISTITUTO DI PSICOSINTESI

Fondato da Roberto Assagioli

www.psicosintesi.it

XV CONGRESSO INTERNAZIONALE

LA SETE E LA SORGENTE

Percorsi transpersonali

THIRST AND THE WELLSPRING

Transpersonal itineraries

25 - 28 Ottobre 2024 Abano Terme - Venezia

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24th - 27th October 2024

International Congress - Hotel Alexander Abano Terme PD, Italy

28th October 2024

Roberto Assagioli: Symposium at "Scuola Grande di S. Giovanni Evangelista", Venice

THURSDAY 24th October

19.30 Welcome and pre-registration

FRIDAY 25th October

8.30	10.00	Registration	
10.00	10.30	Welcome speeches from local authorities	
10.30	11.00	Along the I - SELF axis, rediscover and follow the inner path D. De Paolis	On the evening of Friday, October 25 th , the screening of a new film by F. Maraghini and E. Pacileo, focusing on partial aspects of personality
11.00	11.30	Psychosynthesis 2050 A. Bocconi	
11.30	12.00	The project of the soul: rediscovered love A. Alberti	
12.00	12.30	Ahimsā P. Ferrucci	
12.30	13.15	Panel discussion	
13.30		Lunch	
15.00	15.30	Leaving the peak and descending into the valley – the value of Service M. Fiore	15.00 17.00 workshops*
15.30	16.00	“Unknown to those who know him, known to those who do not know him” (Upanishad) S. Viviani	
16.00	16.30	Neuro-Kynematics and elevation of consciousness: the transformative Power of Cinema in the Psychosynthesis V. De Maio	
16.30	17.00	Mnemosyne: the Source of the memory of the Self’s memory to Awakening of the Soul, between science and spirituality M. Aragona	
17.00	17.30	Coffee break	
17.30	18.00	Revealing to yourself: The inner journey from personality to Soul M. Bernardi	17.30 19.30 workshops*
18.00	18.30	Myth of the hero and will to power D. Fuzzi	
18.30	19.00	The impeccability of the Warrior: the role of leader, between ethics and vocation E. Morbidelli	
19.00	20.00	Panel discussion	
20.30		Dinner	

*The talks not included in the program will be proposed in the weeks preceeding the Congress via videos sent to those registered at the conference. *Topics of workshops will be available later.*

SATURDAY 26th October

8.30	9.00	Meditation	
9.00	9.30	The "I" and Identity in Transition K. Connolly	9.00 11.00 workshops*
9.30	10.00	Beyond Thirst: The Transformative Role of Art and Beauty in Psychosynthesis K. Hackwood	
10.00	10.30	A Psychology of the Future T. Dijckman	
10.30	11.00	Inner child psychology on the path to the Self B. Haus	
11.00	11.30	Coffee break	
11.30	12.00	The Place of Psychosynthesis in Addressing Collective Trauma in Today's World D. Whitmore	11.30 13.30 workshops*
12.00	12.30	Beyond and back W. Parfitt	
12.30	13.30	Panel discussion	
13.30		Lunch	
15.00	15.30	La tradition française du Rêve Eveillé S. Berault	15.00 17.00 workshops*
15.30	16.00	Psychosynthesis of Nations H. Piron	
16.00	16.30	The Experience of the Personal and Transpersonal Self K. Soerensen	
16.30	17.00	Some impediments to a wider, deeper synthesis M. Kirwin	
17.00	17.30	Coffee break	
17.30	18.00	The original light S. Guarino	<i>On Saturday, October 26th, the actor Elio Crifò will perform a piece dedicated to Roberto Assagioli</i>
18.00	18.30	The source that always gushes, at the bottom of the soul M. Vannini	
18.30	19.00	Consciousness and free will F. Faggin	
19.00	20.00	Panel discussion	
21.00		Gala Dinner	

SUNDAY 27th October

8.30	9.00	Meditation	
9.00	9.30	The insatiable thirst of Giovanni Papini: a transpersonal journey S.Toth Izso	09.00 11.00 workshops*
9.30	10.00	From french Therapeutic Theater to the 7 notes of the Soul: Jacques and Buddha compared on stage D. Paolini	
10.00	10.30	Knowing, owning and transforming money for ethics in life M. Spinello	
10.30	11.00	Sublime consciousness A. Vianello	
11.00	11.30	Coffee break	
11.30	12.00	"Dagoberto (Roberto) and others" R. Giacomini e A. Mazzolini	
12.30	13.30	Panel discussion	
13.30		Lunch	

XV INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

THIRST AND THE WELLSPRING

Transpersonal itineraries

SUNDAY 27th October EXCURSION TO VALSANZIBIO

14.30	15.00	Transfer to Valsanzibio
15.00	17.30	Visit to Villa Barbarigo
17.30	18.00	Return to Hotel in Abano Terme

MONDAY 28th October VENICE Assagioli in the cultural framework of his time: Symposium at “Scuola Grande di S. Giovanni Evangelista” (optional)

Consecutive interpreting provided

9.00		Transfer to Venice
11.00	11.15	Welcome and introduction S. Guarino
11.15	12.00	Assagioli in the cultural framework of his time P. Giovetti
12.00	12.40	Hebrew culture in Assagioli's time Alberto Sermoneta, Chief Rabbi of Venice
12.45	13.00	Conclusion and final greetings S. Guarino
13.00	19.00	Free time in Venice
19.00	20.00	Return to Hotel in Abano Terme

VISIT TO CASA ASSAGIOLI (optional, max 22 people) *transport to Florence not provided by Congress organization*

Tuesday 29th October

14.30	15.00	Arrival at Casa Assagioli
15.00	19.00	Initial rite, visit and consultation of Archives/Library
19.00		Dinner at table

Wednesday 30th October

9.30	13.00	Consultation of Archives/Library
13.00		Lunch (Buffet)
14.00		Sharing, conclusion and photograph, farewell

THE SYMBOLS OF THE OVOID (EGG DIAGRAM)

Translated by Alberto Gabba/ Gordon Leonard Symons

The study of symbols and their systematic use, due to the effectiveness they have in psychic life, is an integral part of the evolutionary path. Images, graphs and words, entrusted to the psyche, have the power to induce their energetic qualities in it.

A symbol in the depths of the psyche is worth a thousand words. The function of the symbol is to bring out new lines of thought and open doors of psychic rooms to awareness with new understandings, in an almost infinite path. The more you consider a symbol and reflect on it, the more it broadens the meaning of the visions it contains, encouraging growth and evolution.

Symbols are energetic entities, they are psychic batteries, endowed with evolutionary force, that are generated as the consciousness that examines them changes and expands and grasps their multiple meanings.

Whoever delves curiously into the symbol to grasp the meaning it conceals, can gradually reel off, if he becomes passionate, pearls of an endless rosary of interpretations that can lead him to ever more intimate and profound visions of the existential reality in which he is immersed. Proceeding beyond superficial and partial meanings, he reaches understandings that embrace contents of the supra-systems and subsystems of his psyche.

The symbol *“Is the language with which the Infinite Spirit speaks to finite spirits.”* (Berkeley)

The symbol does not remain caged in the rational mind. It doesn't just speak to the analytical mind, it also speaks to the intuitive mind. It contains meanings of personal experience but in it there are also meanings that extend into the universal. To advance on the path, those who face the process of psychological growth are required to research these meanings, make them their own, understand what they transmit and make it operational. The knowledge that the psyche extracts from symbols with reflections and intuitions progressively renews the existential path of the individual. It makes him proceed. The supposed *objective* and *incontrovertible* reality that the psyche claims to grasp is, let us remember, the

putting together of a symbolic narrative text published by itself - a text that is not printed in millions of copies - but in a single and personal copy, dissimilar from the others, even if words and writings can be similar. Despite this, the mind almost usually decrees that the reality it intuitively is objective with clear and indisputable meaning.

Let us now venture into the symbol of the Ovoid. But first let's take advantage of C.G. Jung's consideration:

“What we call a symbol is a term, a name, or even a representation, which may be familiar in everyday life and yet has specific connotations beyond its obvious and conventional meaning. It implies something vague, unknown or inaccessible to us, and since there are innumerable things that are beyond the horizon of human understanding, we constantly resort to the use of symbolic terms to represent concepts that are impossible for us to define or fully understand. This is one of the reasons why in all traditions symbolic languages are present.”

The symbol of the Ovoid, designed and laid out on paper by the mind and heart of Assagioli as a scheme, as a map of the human psyche, is defined by him not only as a symbolic scheme, but as a mandala. He recognized in the Egg-shape a profoundly archetypal symbolic value, in which profound and unlimited existential structures are represented with geometric language.

If we observe the design of the diagram, born as an illustrative and clarifying scheme of the human psyche, it initially appears anything but infinite in its content, but its quality as a symbol is made to clarify something which, very complex in reality, fades into unattainable horizons.

Consequently, let us venture in search of some of the meanings it contains, always aware that an image is worth a thousand words. Let us therefore begin the partial journey into the mystery of the diagram and analyse what its geometric shape transmits to each of us. First let's ask ourselves why he chose the ovoid shape instead of the more usual circular shape. Assagioli did not create anything by chance, much less a pattern that he defined as a mandala.

The simple comparison of shapes between the circle and

WHERE DO I COME FROM? WHERE AM I NOW? WHERE AM I GOING?

the ellipse of the diagram provides some evaluations. The circle is the most symmetrical geometric figure. Every point on the circle is equidistant from the centre. In whatever direction it is rotated it remains the same, immutable, immobile. In a temporal sense it has neither beginning nor end. What is the starting point of a circle? The circumference is the perfect symbol of Being. We trace the circumference with a compass, symbol of accuracy, of perfection, while the ellipse at first glance, already appears more dynamic, more complex. The ellipse is an elongated circle and this changes its meaning compared to the circle of Being. It does not have a single centre but two centres called *foci* in geometry. It is a figure intrinsically endowed with duality, with polarity, in which the One, the circle, doubles itself. The symbolism of the ellipse introduces meanings of high and low, past and future, spirit and matter. It manifests becoming. To be represented, the becoming of evolution requires duality: before and after, high and low.

The Ovoid is, therefore, a symbol of becoming. The major axis represents the direction of development over time. Proceeding from below, the past appears and rises upwards, towards the future. The lower and middle unconscious contain the past and the present, the higher unconscious contains future potential in continuous expansion with the elevation of consciousness. This delves into and depicts the eternal question: *where do I come from? Where am I now? Where am I going?* It is a graphic representation of the door open to the mystery of our origins, as well as of our future, our destiny, the path of our evolution. Its direction, conventionally called vertical, can be travelled either upwards or downwards depending on our evolving or involving, rising or regressing in consciousness.

The elongated, stretched circle therefore profoundly changes its meaning, compared to a circle. The introduction of axially actually involves duality and the possibility of existential choices and their representation, depending on where our consciousness places our Self. The major axis of the Ovoid therefore represents the possibility of being able to travel along it throughout life in the two directions low-high or high-low. Symbolically we reflect and position our Self in the

point of the line that we believe corresponds to our current evolutionary level.

Moreover, a strategic point in the diagram is contained in the fact that the transpersonal Self is half inside and half outside the Ovoid of the personality, nor could it be otherwise, since it is the universal nucleus of individual finitude. The Self constitutes at the same time the reduction and confluence of the Universal in the personal and the expansion in the universal of the subject, who through it relates to the Whole. "*The universal Self never loses its intimate connection with the self*". (B. Caldironi).

The embodiment of the Self in the personality can be seen as the *descent* of the spirit/soul into matter/personality. Man's roots are in heaven and this explains why the Self was placed by Assagioli at the top of the Egg Diagram and not in other points.



Piero della Francesca

The Ego, as consciousness, rises and approaches the Self in the evolutionary process or descends and moves away from its source in the regressive and involutory processes. In the oscillation between cellars and attics of the psyche, the enigma of man's participation in life takes shape. Evolution, becoming or regressing, requires the condition of duality and therefore a geometric figure represented by the ellipse and not by the circle.

The Ego derives its identification from above, from the Self, from Being, and not from below or from the outside/periphery. The relationship between the higher levels of consciousness and the lower ones, between the Self and the Ego, is comparable, to indicate their fundamental unity, to that existing between diamond and coal; a greater contrast is not imaginable in the mineral kingdom, however both are made up of the same chemical substance: carbon.

Everyone can then continue to delve deeper into the symbolism of the Ovoid on their own by evaluating, for example, how much they dive into the different sectors that compose it or how much they forget or deny themselves to delve deeper into them. They can, for example, evaluate how rigid and petrified the lines present in their Ovoid are or whether they are flexible and allow the passage of their intuitions, widening their territories. They can thus compress or dilate the Ovoid as a whole or only in some sectors. And so on ...

Let us let intuitions emerge in us by observing it, as when we symbolically look at a flower, a painting, a landscape. Let us now shift our attention from the symbol of geometric elements, the ellipse, to the symbol of nature: the egg (the Ovoid) and take note of the reflections that the symbolism of the egg brings out in our psychic territories.

The egg has always been surrounded by an aura of mystery. Let's think back to the times we were amazed at the hatching of a shell. It was *just an egg* and it took living form! It's a living being! Its profound symbolic value has given rise to centuries-old traditions which see it as the absolute protagonist in the human mind from Neolithic times onwards... and perhaps before. Its symbolism has represented birth, regeneration, the vital principle, the germ of creation

over the centuries. The birth of the world from a cosmic egg is a universally widespread idea, celebrated by various civilizations at the spring equinoctial festival, when nature revives. Everywhere in mythologies an egg is the germ of life and is the first being to emerge from Chaos. It is the *Egg of the world*, hatched by a Great Goddess and opened by the Divinity. It carries within itself both the origin from which Everything comes and the cyclical nature of the eternal return. Its sacred and universal symbolic value is linked to its function of ensuring the permanence of life and of the species in the sequence of living beings. The egg therefore goes from being the protagonist of cosmogonic myths to being the generator of rebirth in Nature. It contains new life ready to blossom. It is the ancestral archetype of fertility, creation, transfiguration, awakening, rebirth, immortality. We find this archetypal idea in philosophy in the Aristotelian concept of entelechy, the germ in which everything is enclosed.

Its symbolism emerges and generates intuitions for the function of preserving and ensuring the permanence of life. It is no coincidence that the ovoid shape recalls the conformation of the pregnant woman's womb, that is of life that appears, grows, develops, and then appears in the world.

Furthermore, all the essential nutritional elements are found in the egg. It is the synthesis of the four elements: earth in the shell, air in the membrane, water in the egg white, fire in the yolk. Let us try to see them symbolically in the ovoid proposed by Assagioli, each activating their own interpretative horizons.

Its strong symbolic value generated among the peoples the tradition of giving eggs as gifts. The custom of exchanging eggs at Easter, or during the Spring Equinox, is reported to have existed throughout the ages. Romans, Babylonians, Persians, Chinese and other peoples celebrated the arrival of Spring by exchanging eggs, synonymous with greetings and good wishes.

In the Christian Middle Ages, real blessed eggs were given as gifts. Eating eggs consecrated in Church allowed the faithful to participate in the grace of the Resurrection.

Later, the habit of exchanging silver and gold eggs, embellished with pearls, gems and enamels like those

forged by Fabergé, spread among the nobility. In the 1920s, a surprise began to be inserted inside. Then the Ferrero Kinder egg was born, which won over generations of children.

Transformed into a commercial phenomenon, and emptied of any sacred connotation, the Easter egg is today a mere chocolate container enclosing surprises. Consumerism has diverted its symbolic qualities in favour of increasingly commercial values. Hoarded by consumerism, it is now a useful product for doing *business*.

But for those who are following the psychosynthetic path, the egg, even if packaged in chocolate, maintains its profound symbolism. It gives life, soul, experiences of resurrection, of fertility, of psychic evolution, of eternal return to life.

The Ovoid, proposed by Assagioli in his writings and graphics, is, therefore, a hypothesis of symbolic research that projects towards the Beyond and towards personal meanings into which to delve. The interpretations that everyone creates in their own psyche are the product of the phase of their evolutionary journey. There are therefore as many *versions* and *visions* as there are minds that pause to examine it. Every thought, every judgement, is the result compliant with the level reached in the existential process. We are their active *inventors*!

“Many believe that fantasy only serves to escape reality, whereas it serves to understand and interpret it better”.
(F. Volo)

Stating that one has understood the symbolic meaning of the Ovoid indicates, at best, that, for the time being, one’s interpretation does not seem to give rise to discrepancies with what others have proposed. But let’s reflect on Pirandello’s words: *“We all have a world of things inside us: each one has one’s own world of things! And how can we understand each other if in the words I say I put the meaning and value of things as they are inside me; while those who listen to them inevitably take them on with the meaning and value they have for themselves, the meaning of the world as they have it inside?”*.

If the interpretation of a symbol is *univocal* it means

that, in the event, the psyche *is satisfied* and *limits itself*. Choosing images or words to evoke qualities is a technique to be learned. Once we have chosen them, let’s display them in the rooms we are in during the day; every time we look at them, even unconsciously, the qualities they contain are absorbed and impressed in us. Their vibrant force stimulates our latent or immature aspects and brings them into line with the desired energetic principles. They are beacons that point towards the future. The Ovoid orients towards the future.

For each symbol, Ovoid included, if we want to proceed along the evolutionary path, it is advisable to seek readings, observations, *Assagiolini*, which from time to time would activate ideational openings that deepen and broaden the vision.

May the awareness prevail in us that our psyche entrusts part of the path of life to the understanding of the symbolism enclosed in the Ovoid, always aware that the larger the island of its knowledge becomes within us, the larger the sea of our ignorance becomes.

ONE MAN'S WORK

24



Portrait - Roberto Assagioli

Translated by Damiano Pagani / Gordon Leonard Symons

A few months ago, I had the opportunity to read a good part of Assagioli's diaries. It was a reading that interested me greatly and which allowed me to deepen my knowledge of a man whom I admired so much for his wisdom and intuition: an admiration which, thanks to this reading, has further increased.

I believe we all approach the diaries and biographies of great figures like Assagioli with a certain reverence, having the idea that they were already born as great people, that they were exceptional from birth but perhaps we also do it to absolve ourselves and probably

for this reason we tend not to think about how much hard work and effort of will they had to valorise themselves, and about the effort that lies behind the ability to make themselves better. As for the young Roberto, he was certainly a particularly gifted boy; he very early felt the *call* to a great commitment to humanity, he graduated in medicine at a very young age, had a great culture and spoke several languages including sanskrit, he met the greatest psychiatrists and psychologists of his time, but by reading his diaries I was able to realize, with an appreciation that made him more human to me, his weaknesses, his limits and how much he had to work on himself. So, I discovered that especially in the first years of his diary (remember that Assagioli began writing his diaries in 1926, when he was 37 years old), he complained about his inconstancy in meditation, his difficulty in giving himself the right rhythm, he denounced his laziness and chronic lack of energy. He will always complain about his own lack of energy and a certain passivity, even in his years of greater maturity, until it is then justified by his advanced age. Reading about his weaknesses, I was saying, made him more human to me and increased my sympathy and consideration towards him, because it showed me clearly how he managed to be that teacher that we all admire thanks to a great will and a lot of work on himself.

It is precisely thanks to this great ability to work on himself and to experiment with the most appropriate personal transformation techniques on his own limits, that he in turn managed to make Psychosynthesis a great educational and self-training method. This is what I believe to be Assagioli's greatest merit. Personally, it seems to me that Psychosynthesis has not brought much new from a therapeutic point of view, except for the certainly important aspect of recognizing and giving consideration and value to the influences of the Superconscious and what have been called its *rights*. Even considering this, it seems to me that Assagioli's work is more important from the point of view of self-training, the latter word being of particular importance in his teaching, because it gives a precise indication to an aspect that is almost always ignored: the ability and duty of the adult to continue the evolution of his

EVERY CHILD IS CREATIVE; THE REAL CHALLENGE OF LIFE IS TO REMAIN THAT WAY AS YOU GROW.

personality in a free manner, guided by himself. In the article “Per una moderna Psicagogia” (*For a modern Psychagogy*, ed) which appeared on February the 25th, 1909 in “La Voce”, Prezzolini’s newspaper, Assagioli, at only twenty-one years old, wrote: *‘(It is a mistake) not to consider the child as the future man and to interrupt one’s action precisely at the age in which it would begin to be truly fruitful. Precisely when the youngster is most capable of being educated, because on the one hand he has not yet lost the great plasticity of childhood, on the other his more mature mind and his greater capacity for attention, his greater energy make him capable to benefit much more than the child from every help and advice; precisely then, modern education cannot give him anything other than a deluge of knowledge and impose on him the obligation to be obedient, composed, diligent’.*

“Psychagogy on the other hand, continues Assagioli, ‘says that man is never something defined, static, accomplished, but is in continuous formation, education must continue throughout his life, that the same psychological laws, which regulate the psychic life of the child also regulate that of the adult and therefore the same methods that serve for the education of one serve, with the appropriate adjustments, for the education of the other’”.

In the article, the concept of lifelong education and the profound understanding of how fundamental it is to teach to cultivate oneself throughout one’s life is already evident, as he himself will do for himself. I would say that these are words that constitute the seed of Psychosynthesis itself, in them the Neoplatonism of the father of our school already merges in a perfect synthesis with the ideas of the most advanced philosophy of his time, that of Phenomenology and Existentialism.

These three philosophical roots, Neoplatonism, Existentialism and Phenomenology, together with his interests in Theosophy and Hindu culture, will soon lead him to criticize and overcome the naturalistic conception also present in Freud’s Psychoanalysis, and to his distancing from the latter, to arrive at a psychology that

places at the centre not simply the human being, but his essence, and at the educational and therapeutic value of the recognition of this essential nature, an essential nature which is both consciousness and will. A will with a central role, precisely because it is understood as a responsive, dynamic aspect of consciousness itself. This is what Assagioli teaches us: to bring attention to this invisible dimension, and to discover that we are this invisible dimension, this *other* nature, an original nature totally different from simply phenomenal reality. This is man’s conscience, a noumenal reality, the exposed part of his own soul. In his vision, the Universe tends towards synthesis, which for him is synonymous with evolution, and man’s consciousness is the pre-eminent protagonist, through which this synthesis can proceed and take place.

The work of a man is therefore to realize this synthesis first of all in himself, recognizing and knowing how to distinguish from this internal dimension the central from the peripheral, the essential from the external, the profound from the superficial.

In Assagioli, educating truly corresponds to an action of extraction, as the etymology of the word itself says, something that cannot be conceived by the current, positivist and mechanistic paradigm, still prevalent throughout the Western world, and perhaps we could now say on a universal level. A paradigm that is still slow to recognize that natural and innate heritage that is the child’s internal qualities, and that continues to believe that values are something that can only be given from the outside. Assagioli, on the other hand, knows well that the superior values are already in the child and the task of education is only to evoke them; and that education administered as an imposition can easily lead to refusal, damaging what could and should be a spontaneous, natural awareness.

Picasso said: *‘Every child is creative; The real challenge of life is to remain that way as you grow.’* We adults, on the other hand, often tend to repress this creativity, because we want our children to be calm and silent. Assagioli is fully aware that good pedagogy should never force, he knows well that imposition ends up ruining the

spontaneous creativity of the child, that only the child's freedom will allow the creativity of the future man, avoiding conformism, but above all allowing him to be truly useful to society thanks to a thinking capable of seeing the new and undertaking it. And all this becomes even more important today in a world that is preparing to delegate every repetitive job to robotic mechanics. We now know that man's work in the immediate future will be increasingly entrusted to his creative ability and his capacity to renew himself professionally.

Education can continue in the adult with self-training and in particular with the technique of creating an external unifying centre, a creation that makes use of the perception of one's own centre to intuit and bring into manifestation a new personality that allows an approach to themselves. It's about intuiting how to better express what we realistically perceive we can be, imagining it as our ideal model and undertaking a practice to realize it, to bring into manifestation, in a practical way, our new way of being, a personality that we feel we be more similar to, which allows us to express ourselves better.

It is therefore a question of reorganizing one's personality by forming a nucleus around a cause, a purpose or an ideal that is more suitable for us to express and which will act on us from the future; instead of being influenced by the past, we will be influenced by the future, teleologically, as an expression of our own potential. This will drag all parts of us into evolution, which will end up conforming and adapting to this new nucleus. There will be no need to work on every single part, because this nucleus which represents our evolution as it brings us closer to ourselves, will make our personality evolve naturally and overall. It's nothing magical, it's what happened to all of us, for example, when we decided to develop a professionalism. But the conscious use of this technique gives us the advantage of giving us full awareness of what we are undertaking and gives the possibility of being applied in various ways and fields, and above all with the aim of bringing our best qualities into manifestation. It will be evolutionary, in fact, precisely to the extent that it allows us to express superconscious values. Creating a new personality that

can bring superior values into expression is already creating a new home for our soul, a new home that should have the ultimate goal of bringing us closer to wisdom. Wisdom, like joy, like humility and like all properly transpersonal qualities, is not something that can be achieved directly, simply by wanting it, it is not obtained *per intentionem*, but *per effectum*, as the philosophers say, to reach that eternal balance between doing what you can and knowing how to accept that everything is what it is. Assagioli was an example in this too, he was recognized as a wise man because he managed to create this home within himself, and make wisdom inhabit it.

THE MANDALA, A MEANS FOR INNER DIALOGUE, A TOOL FOR SYNTHESIS AND SELF-AWARENESS.

Everything the Power of the World does is done in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves. Our teepees were round like the nests of birds, and these were always set in a circle, the nation's hoop, a nest of many nests, where the Great Spirit meant for us to hatch our children.

Black Elk

27

Translated by Luisa Bertolatti/ Gordon Leonard Symons

A Story as old as Mankind

In Sanskrit, Māṇḍala (मण्डल) [meaning: «essence» (maṇḍa) + «possess» or «contain» (la), also translated as “circle-circumference” or “cycle”]⁽¹⁾ is the symbolic diagram of the cosmos, of the inner and outer universe, that contains and harmonises shapes. The Mandala is a psychocosmogram.

The laws of the universe, of nature, and indeed of Mankind, seem to follow this circular movement. We are conceived within a Mandala, the uterus, and initially develop as a Mandala of cells, a morula. We live on a Mandala, the Earth, and when we need comfort we yearn for an embrace, a Mandala, to hold us.

“The Mandala is the model of the origin of creation, or the journey from the micro- to the macro-cosmos. The fact that the Mandala is the main model or symbol of our world is easy to comprehend, even for materialists; everything that exists in the material world is made of a Mandala, in that each thing is made of atoms. Atoms are Mandalas. They both quietly adopt the moves of a concentric dance of (clouds of) electrons around the atomic nucleus»⁽²⁾.

The circle is such a representative structure of the world around us that Mankind has used it since ancient times as a symbolic image to represent Mankind itself, the material world, and the spiritual world. Mandala shapes can be found in cave art in Africa, Europe and America.

Mandala shapes represent Man's ancestral need to feel part of the Whole, to be within a Cosmic Union. This need for universal belonging is represented through creativity, through the expression of personal skill in generating new shapes.

Therefore, the drawing of a circumference, or more elaborate patterns such as a spiral or rays that radiate from the centre outwards, represent the eternal desire to be in touch with the divine, which we perceive to be outside of ourselves: the sun and moon are gods, and the only way to reach them appears to be through their representation. The symbolic representation drawn through the shape of a Mandala is the connection between the inside and the outside, and the outside within. The design becomes a symbol, and the act of depicting it, a ritual. The created image is not intended as a means to receive immediate answers, but is rather a form of inner comfort, a quest for the Sacred.

The Mandala, being an archetypal shape, in other words a model, an image with primordial and universal content embedded in collective consciousness, is expressed not just over millennia, but also across different cultures.

For example, Mandala designs such as the Triskel, a symbol made up of three spirals, can be found in Celtic tradition, but can also be found in other cultures, but it is evident that this symbol was highly important for Celtic populations, in that it could represent the movement of the sun, therefore a kind of “sun-wheel” which is reminiscent of the Irish god Dagda.

For Native Americans, dreamcatchers were symbols that were hung outside the curtains of their homes, and indicated the profession of esteemed men such as medicine men.

Dreamcatchers were made using different ornaments and colours according to the profession that was to be

represented. The Navajo people drew Mandala sand paintings to restore health and bring the sick back to the harmonious existence they had lost. When Western Man arrived, the original meaning was lost, re-interpreted, and now bears the significance of a tool that casts away evil spirits and protects restful sleep, banishing nightmares. This could be seen to be reductive compared to the intention of the symbol, which was destined to bring healing.

Mandala shapes are also very common in the Christian faith, for example, in church rose windows. In cathedrals, important emblematic shapes such as the labyrinth, which perhaps represents Mankind’s difficulty in finding the righteous path without the aid of God, can also be found.

Certainly, the most renowned Mandalas originated in Indo-Tibetan Buddhist faiths, where they became a tool for one’s own personal and spiritual evolution.



Tibetan sand Mandala

Carl Gustav Jung was not just a psychiatrist and psychologist, but was also an anthropologist. During his journeys through Northern Africa, Arizona, New Mexico and Kenya, he discovered the existence of stark similarities between images of primitive mythology and “civilised” consciousness. He became the first Westerner to unify and organise⁽³⁾ Man’s intuitive knowledge across time, religions and cultures described thus far. Jung believed that individual subconsciousness is just a fraction of the psychic structure of Man. His anthropology and mythology studies led him to theorise a collective consciousness that encompasses common and transversal behavioural models across time, cultures and populations, which he calls “archetypes”. Archetypes are innate potentials within Mankind, inherited from the features of collective psyche and behaviour. Mankind reconnects and reactivates the behaviours and features of these, and they are so powerful within the collective consciousness that their symbolic representations are very similar throughout different cultures and across different eras and traditions. One of these archetypical symbols is the circle, the Mandala.

«“The Mandala is a very important archetype. It is the archetype of inner order and expresses the fact that there is a centre and a periphery, seeking to embrace the whole. It is the symbol of totality. Therefore, during therapy, when there is great disorder and chaos in the patient’s psyche, this symbol may appear in the form of a Mandala in dreams or in free fantasies or drawings. The Mandala appears spontaneously as a compensatory archetype, bringing order and showing the possibility of order»»⁽⁴⁾

Jung was the first to use the Sanskrit word Mandala for the images created within a circumference that he and his patients both drew intuitively. Jung believed the Mandala to be a representation of the Self. In the circular image, the central point is connected to the rest of the image and is the main regulator and harmoniser of psychic content. The Mandala as a symbol of the Self represents the unity of consciousness, the connection between individual and collective consciousness. It expresses the entirety of the individual and their relationship with the universe. According to Jung, the Mandala is a therapeutic tool to

reharmonise fragmented parts of the personality in order to reconnect with the centre, the vital nucleus of force and energy, and reactivate inner resources.

The Mandala as a symbol and tool for synthesis

The Mandala is the representation of Rhythm, Harmony, and the Laws of the Universe. Man becomes ill when there is a disconnection from this Natural ‘Order.’ From a biological perspective, if we are in harmony with these laws, we adhere to a principle of conservation, harmonization, and therefore, greater efficiency in terms of energy and “health”.

The Mandala is a psychocosmogram that represents an isomorphism between external Nature and the inner world, that is the psyche. Nature is preserved and renewed, it overcomes obstacles and finds new forms, it harmonises around a stable centre that coordinates and supplements the various elements to find ever new configurations that are most suitable to maintaining this balance. Thus, Nature pulsates, is generative. Balance is not static but rather dynamic, otherwise the risk would be the crystallisation of life, leading it to perish. From a psychological perspective, in Psychosynthesis, this movement of element integration around a central point and the consequent harmonisation and creation of a new shape is called the process of Synthesis. Synthesis is a Greek word, *syn-thesis*⁽⁵⁾, that means *composition*: “The expression of a universal principle, a manifestation of the general law of syntropy, synthesis is different from a mixture, a simple sum of the properties of individual elements, because it consolidates two elements into a higher unity with qualities that are distinct from each of them, in a superior reality that encompasses and transcends them. To enact it, the powerful action of a higher regulating principle is required.”⁽⁶⁾

Assagioli leads from the assumption that Unity exists before the separation of each part, which may appear opposite but, being complementary, tend towards Unity.

Our psyche is formed by a multitude of content and counteracting forces; these elements can create

THE MANDALA AS A SYMBOL OF HARMONY AND SYNTHESIS AROUND A UNIFYING CENTRE

alliances, can interact, and are even capable of grouping and uniting in somewhat organised structures (called Subpersonalities in Psychosynthesis), because our psyche also tends towards unity.

It appears that nothing is truly coincidental, that there is a Superior Intelligence that coordinates the various forces of nature through its own Laws, and that the respecting of these Laws allows life to regenerate, to be renewed, and to proceed towards an evolutionary movement: the interrelation of its elements means that life itself creates life in a harmonic macro-cosmos. This Superior Intelligence is within us, and our inner world is Its expression. Mankind is an integral part of this process. Man represents the “micro” that is a reflection of the “macro”. Man is a multidimensional being, these dimensions are interrelated, the physical dimension cannot be disconnected from the emotional dimension, nor the mental dimension. The effects of emotions and thoughts on our “physical” well-being are now common knowledge. Psychosomatic medicine and PNEI, Psycho-Neuro-Endocrine-Immunology, study and deal with these effects from a scientific standpoint. From a psychological perspective, Psychosynthesis explains their function and correlation through the laws of psychodynamics⁽⁷⁾. Assagioli was a great precursor of this. According to Psychosynthesis, the inner dimensions of man – physical, emotional and mental – are harmonized by a superior regulating principle, by the transpersonal dimension.

If unobstructed, the movement of this integration, correlation and interdependency of each part, is fluid. If we can imagine this fluidity symbolically, in order to maintain its flow-like state it must not meet sharp corners, nor sudden changes in direction. These corners, which represent conflict, obstacles or crystallisations, break the shape. The cornerless figure is the circle itself, the Mandala. The centre of the Mandala depicts the Transpersonal Self, a source of creative energy that conveys stability, unity and a sense of the whole. The Mandala represents the harmony of the inner universe of Man. I believe it not to be a coincidence that the symbol of Psychosynthesis is an ovoid, an elongated circle that

contains humankind and their dimensions, commencing from a centre that radiates outwards into a bi-directional movement that also radiates from the outside within.

The condition of psychophysical well-being is not stable. We often feel fragmented inside, we feel confused, we don't know which direction to take. We have the feeling of having lost our centre. We feel inner conflict, as if there were forces in motion that move in different directions.

The Mandala as a symbol of harmony and synthesis around a unifying centre can help us in stimulating a process of inner clarification, understanding, and choice of direction. The simple act of colouring predesigned Mandala shapes activates creativity, as well as giving the feeling of rediscovering and inputting colour into our lives, therefore guiding us towards the feeling of possibility of choice, and being capable of conducting the situation, and ourselves. By using the Mandala in this way, we can exercise and develop areas of our brain within the cerebral cortex that regulate intuition and creativity (right hemisphere) or logic and reason (left hemisphere). We activate both hemispheres through colouring.⁽⁸⁾

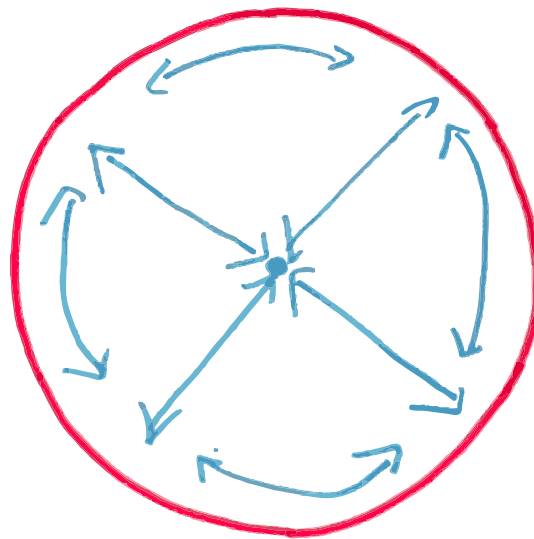
The simple act of colouring allows us to find our harmonic rhythm, creating a state of well-being. Rudiger Dahlke speaks of this technique, stating that *“By colouring pre-existing structures we practise fitting into a model that is prior to us, and which we cannot radically change”*⁽⁹⁾. Dahlke's observations also refer back to the need for a Superior Order, which is stronger than a “personal human system”, to rediscover the respect for universal law that modern Man struggles to recognise. Perhaps we have lost that basic humility that we should feel towards Life as a Creative Mother, and it is only by getting closer to her, to her model, her example, that we can become co-creators of ourselves. When designing a Mandala, we can choose two methods. We can create a geometric design within a circumference with symmetrical parts that radiate from the centre towards the outer edge. Through the movements of the hand, colours and shapes, we can find a sort of inner harmony. Drawing symmetrical

Mandalas also brings a state of inner peace. The second method is creating a design within a circumference, with a central point indicated in the middle, that is freehand and spontaneous, that can avoid symmetry, and can represent different shapes. This releases creative and creator forces, and in symbolical terms gives shape to the parts of the self that need to emerge at that moment in time.

The person is free to move within the circumference. When creating a Mandala, there is also a feeling of reassuring containment through self-expression. It is as if we could listen to ourselves through shapes and colours and see ourselves reflected from another point of view, we disidentify from ourselves. The depicted images may bring out intuitions and solutions and become food for thought.

It is a process of revelation as well as recognition of oneself through an alternative perspective. For an adult, drawing can be unusual, like a transgression, compared to the image one has of oneself. Trying something new, however, can give the pleasure of novelty, a sort of small transgression from our stiffness, from a static image of ourselves. In fact, transgressing means going beyond, and when we try to go beyond, to break our routine and our crystallised sense of security, we feel more energised, it is the energy of the new that regenerates us, and we become more self-aware of our abilities. New perspectives can open up.

I have asked myself why a simple drawing on a sheet of paper doesn't reap the same benefits, and what the difference of drawing within a circle with a central point is. The answer I have given myself is that perhaps there is great power within these forms. In terms of psychic energy, it's as if the energies from the centre moved outwards, and from the exterior to the interior, rotating in each possible direction, both right and left, finding harmony and stability whilst creating movement and transformation. All this does not happen by simply drawing on a sheet of paper: when inside a circumference, everything is amplified, harmonised and synthesised.



Directions of energy within a Mandala

Dahlke states:

“Even if we do not have a scientifically sustainable explanation for this aspect, everything seems to indicate how therapy using the Mandala also contributes to harmonising the energy flow. Through its complementary symmetric rotation pattern, as it could be defined in geometric terms, the Mandala radiates the highest form of harmony”⁽¹¹⁾.

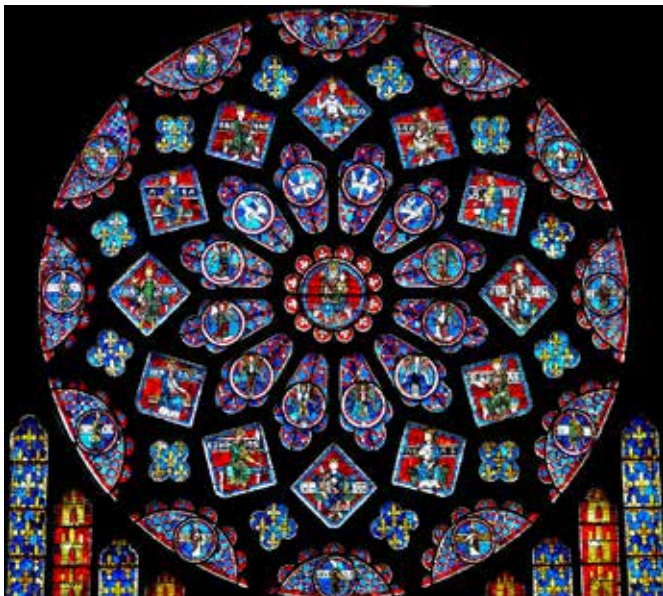
When the Mandala becomes an experience, it helps to be more in tune with oneself, with one's opposites. Through this internal dialogue we are simultaneously at a higher and deeper point, we learn to exist in both suffering and in joy, since both are forged from the same source, the source of the Self, where there is no division, and where there is Peace of the One.

“True self-knowledge, that leads to self-awareness and to re-establishing lost balance, is experience; because action that does not adapt to knowledge is not a good, but an evil: knowledge that does not transform life and is not created within it is a cause for disharmony”⁽¹²⁾.

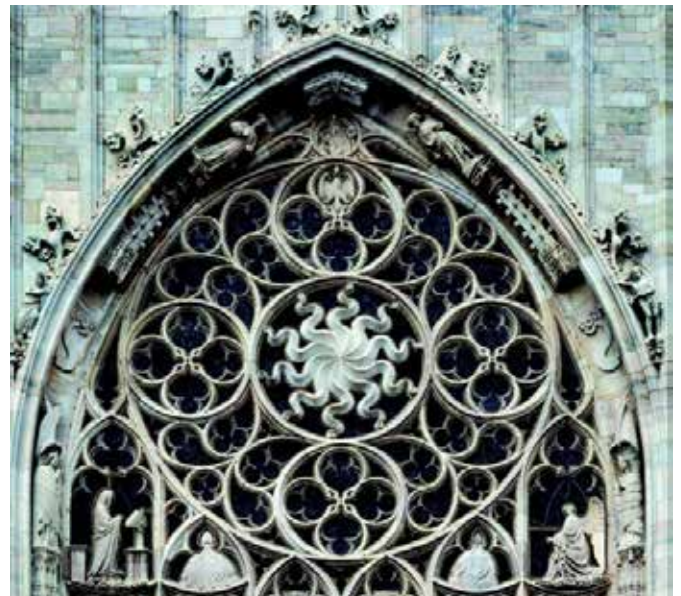
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Chartes Cathedral



Milan Cathedral

PSYCHOSYNTHETIC EXPERIENCES WITH PEOPLE RELEASED FROM PRISON AND SEEKING A NEW FUTURE.

Translated by Greta Bianchi/ Gordon Leonard Symons

Between October and November 2023, the A.P.A.S. (Provincial Association for Social Assistance for Inmates, for those discharged from correctional facilities, and their families) met in Trento to seek collaboration in designing and conducting a 4-session program, each lasting 3 hours. The proposal is directed towards a small group of individuals released from the Trento correctional facility, entering into a new phase in their lives. They are individuals of various nationalities, with complex and painful pasts, having spent a considerable time in prison and are now, with the support of A.P.A.S., seeking a fresh start.

“What should we propose?” “Would Psychosynthesis be useful and effective?” “How can we translate concepts like disidentification into concrete and usable actions in the lives of these individuals?”

Numerous doubts and questions arise in mine and Francesca Valdini’s minds. However, Trust in the human spirit and Courage prevail, and we decide to embrace the request as an opportunity to engage in the social sphere, one that may be far removed from our daily lives but remains part of our shared reality. And here’s what has emerged!

“I know what i feel”

Recognizing and giving identity makes us free.

We sit in a circle and listen to the words of Amin, Osas, Said, Schik and Bardi. Five stories of different colors: fears and struggles, mistrust and caution, curiosity and a desire to start anew... A multitude of emotions circulate within the circle, thus begins a short yet intense journey to *‘feel’* what stirs within and learn how to manage their emotions to foster positive relationships with others.

The body is the primary vessel for expressing emotions, and thus, a game begins using a soccer ball: ‘Who are you, and how do you feel now, here?’ Every response is valid - there is no right or wrong emotional expression, only pleasant or unpleasant emotions.

“You’re tormenting me...” “How amusing,” “Lightness,” “I feel obliged to be here,” “Annoyed,”

“I’m sad,” “It makes me laugh,” “I feel connected to the group”...

Here they are, our emotions - different colors intertwining yet embraced in a vibrant puzzle. And further: *“What do I feel when I remember my home country? Let’s introduce ourselves through our country, our roots: let’s build a collage that evokes our land: Senegal, rich in unspoiled nature; Somalia, the most fabulous place to be; Albania, a land resembling Trentino; Tunisia, colors and scents of essences; Nigeria, cultivating fields.” “I feel good; the images of my country open me up” ... “I cry for what I left behind,” “Melancholy and strength...” “I carry its colors with me”... “In the fields. With my parents F. Breathed the future and now?”*

Evocative images speaking of roots, of a fertile moment in personal life, of emotional bonds and hopes. Still feeling a part of a place left behind, sharing the beauty of a part of life. The journey continues, delving deeper into feelings, using a tool that taps into olfactory memory: scents. In the circle, seven essences are presented, each with its distinct note. The scents traverse the group: *“What does the fragrance evoke in you? Close your eyes and let yourself wander...Is it a pleasant or unpleasant sensation? Use a color to describe it...”*

Delving into sensitivity of feeling, refining each sense - memories and emotions emerge. Olfactory memory takes us afar: *“The taste of ginger tea as made back home,” “How comforting the sandalwood is,” “Ah, it’s lavender; we also use it,” “I don’t like sage,” “It reminds me of the massages my mother used to give”...*

Just as emotions, here are the scents: a myriad of shades constantly coursing through us, sometimes known, sometimes unknown - we feel only their impact on the body, at times pleasant and light, at other times heavy and burdensome, obstructing our interactions with others.

“So much weariness, a tangle of red that doesn’t unravel,” “Tension, concern in a thousand recurring thoughts, yet relaxation when I see nature,” “Fear but also hope,” “So much anger for a destiny I’ve crafted,” “Sadness for the son I’m yet to meet: what will he think of me?”...



Two very different realities, almost opposing, coexist on the same page: how to bring them together? What to do after seeing them? What if weariness lingers? If anger remains? If sadness becomes a black hole? If beauty fails to enter even a sliver of the day?

We work with clay: through manipulation, by doing, the unpleasant emotion is released, anger, sadness, pain, fear are transformed, and observed. In the silence brought by the work, there are sounds of pounding, crumpling, breaking, mixing, cutting, crushing...almost emotions in becoming, finding expressive space in the material.

Thus, the unpleasant emotions reside in the grey matter of the clay, embraced and cradled by the earth: each expressing freely what they feel. Everything is welcome, nothing discarded - the group allows it, becoming an emotional melting pot.

Now there is a timid desire, a distant yet emerging wish for some of them to create an object, to give shape to the earth: their shape.

Slowly, objects emerge, strange and unidentified shapes, bridges and worlds, mosques and spirals. The unpleasant emotion has loosened its grip, not entirely overwhelming, it has been observed and is transforming: it now bears a different name and represents what one is in this moment or aspires to be, beyond the part that erred and failed in life.

An object of 'earth' that has opened a simple space of acceptance for what one feels: we color it, give it life, and name it. "Slowness," "Nature," "My mosque," "Passages," "World"... Each presenting it to others, sharing a bit about themselves and their future in a light and smiling atmosphere.

In the group, there are smiling eyes, relaxed faces, almost a tremor of freedom!!

And in conclusion, faced with food emanating scents and aromas from distant lands, many questions resurface: "And in everyday life?" "Perhaps I can redo some exercises: I'll get clay," "How nice to feel like everyone else, not ex-convicts but simple people like you," "I was afraid to speak of my sadness, but here, I found no judges but friends," "I feel lighter even though I know demanding days await me."

From their words, a measured joy emerges, having been able to share their pain, anger, imprisonment without

being judged or interpreted. Feeling seen, being reflected for who they are and not for what they have done, has opened up cracks through which possibilities seep in. The emotions expressed, recognized, narrated, listened to, played with, and transformed allowed them to feel alive, vital, and aware of what traverses them every day: "I know what I feel" are the first steps towards a new inner freedom.

Thanks to Amin, Osas, Said, Schik and Bardi for sharing a piece of their story with us.

Thanks to Roberto Assagioli, whose profound vision of the human being reminds us that the path to freedom is available to everyone.

Antonia Dallapè
Professional Counsellor - Center of Trento



EDUCATIONAL SUGGESTIONS



Translated by Alberto Gabba/ Gordon Leonard Symons

In October 2023 in Padua, at the Sheraton hotel, the 35th National Congress entitled “**THE ART OF EDUCATING - for an integral and harmonious development of the human being**” was held, organized by the Psychosynthesis Institute and the Padua Psychosynthesis Centre, with the collaboration of the National Education Group.

There was a wide participation of people, members and non-members, belonging not only to specifically educational and/or scholastic contexts as one might have expected given the topic, but also to various professional and associational realities. There emerged an interesting and varied debate at the round tables and a stimulating exchange of ideas between those present.

The alternation of moments dedicated to reports and testimonies certainly contributed to a pleasant experience through the event and to attentive listening.

The many voices on education brought lifeblood to each one of us: like many drops of water which, when united, give life to a stream which gradually grows as it progresses downstream, so it was the rush of reports and testimonies, rich and nourishing.

Nothing could be missed! Everything was too interesting, too engaging. Every speech touched the soul!

Several times, in my incessant wandering through the conference spaces, I stopped to observe how people were motionless in their places, without distracting themselves with those next to them, with their gaze focused on the speaker and on the images of the various slide presentations, engaged in grasping every possible food for thought and opportunity ... an almost tangible atmosphere that enveloped everyone.

The testimonies touched the heart.

At certain moments emotion took over; the recounting of experiences lived in different educational and social spheres, with a group of non-EU women, with prison inmates, with children of various ages, adolescents, teachers, adults and elderly people, allowed us to encounter our emotions, fears, prejudices, inadequacies ... and then open ourselves up to welcome, acceptance, understanding of ourselves and of others, as if an invisible thread of good and love touched every person present, expanding beyond the stalls, into the world, into the universe.

And upon leaving the room, during breaks and meal pauses, a flood of smiling, enthusiastic people poured into the hotel lobby. People who had wanted to put their “hands in the dough” and actively experiment with psychosynthesis on themselves, slowly peeped out from the rooms where the workshops were held, as if they did not want to detach themselves from their lived experiences.

What a crackling sound was the chatter of those present, what a harmonious dance were the many sharings!

Every time we collaborators of the Padua Centre met people’s eyes, beautiful smiles broke out, many words of appreciation for the high-level speeches and for the organization of the event, a warm closeness also expressed with the body, through the shaking of hands,

the hugging, the arm in arm, the pats on the back. Amazement and disbelief vibrated in me; I wondered what was going on? After all, it's just a Congress.

Then I realised!

Right from the beginning a magical atmosphere had been created: reviewing some essential themes of psychosynthesis immediately immersed us in the journey of understanding our own internal and social life, highlighting difficulties and showing the possibilities of changing attitude and perspective, the commitment to concretize one's personal and spiritual work, the responsibility of us educators (parents, teachers, psychotherapists, counsellors, professionals in helping relationships...) to think not only about what one is but about what each one can become. The invitation to question ourselves deeply on the meaning and purpose of the educational enterprise in a time, such as this, of crises and vast transformations, the continuous quest for authenticity, to become conscious educators, to keep Assagioli's indications in mind, to remind ourselves of the founding pillars of education (*knowing, doing, living together, being*), to dialogue with other approaches,

to share experiences, projects, strategies, actions, to transform educational emergencies into opportunities for human and social growth and many more other ideas that emerged during the Congress ... a meeting of souls who were no longer alone!

How comforting it was to listen to Caterina Montessori, great-granddaughter of the great pedagogist, who with such grace and humility gave us pages from the lives of two great souls so close to each other, whose legacy we can enjoy today. I would like to quote a sentence taken from the letter sent by Maria Montessori to Assagioli that says "Isn't it perhaps a duty to associate our intentions? A duty towards humanity" to be able to reflect on "What are my intentions and what do I do with them? As an educator, do I put them to good use for humanity?"

And again "How can psychosynthesis offer some answers to the emerging needs of society and to the world of education in particular? Which of your intuitions can become operational projects? What do we want to achieve over time?"



One answer could be: to work on educators' awareness and on prevention, which lead to increasing one's own and others' well-being; acting with a lot of love, developing the great potential that we all possess, fostering an ever wider and stronger relationship between Soul and Heart.

For some years now the Institute of Psychosynthesis has been committed to following this path in a systematic manner and has set up the National Education Group which has created, and continues to carry out, training projects aimed at teachers of all school levels, some of which were illustrated during the Congress. Currently, after a long and laborious work by the Education Group, our Institute has obtained accreditation from the MIM (Ministry of Education and Merit) as a Training Body, thus seeing the acknowledgement of the commitment made, the educational purposes of the courses activated, the skills acquired, the effectiveness of the psychosynthetic proposals.

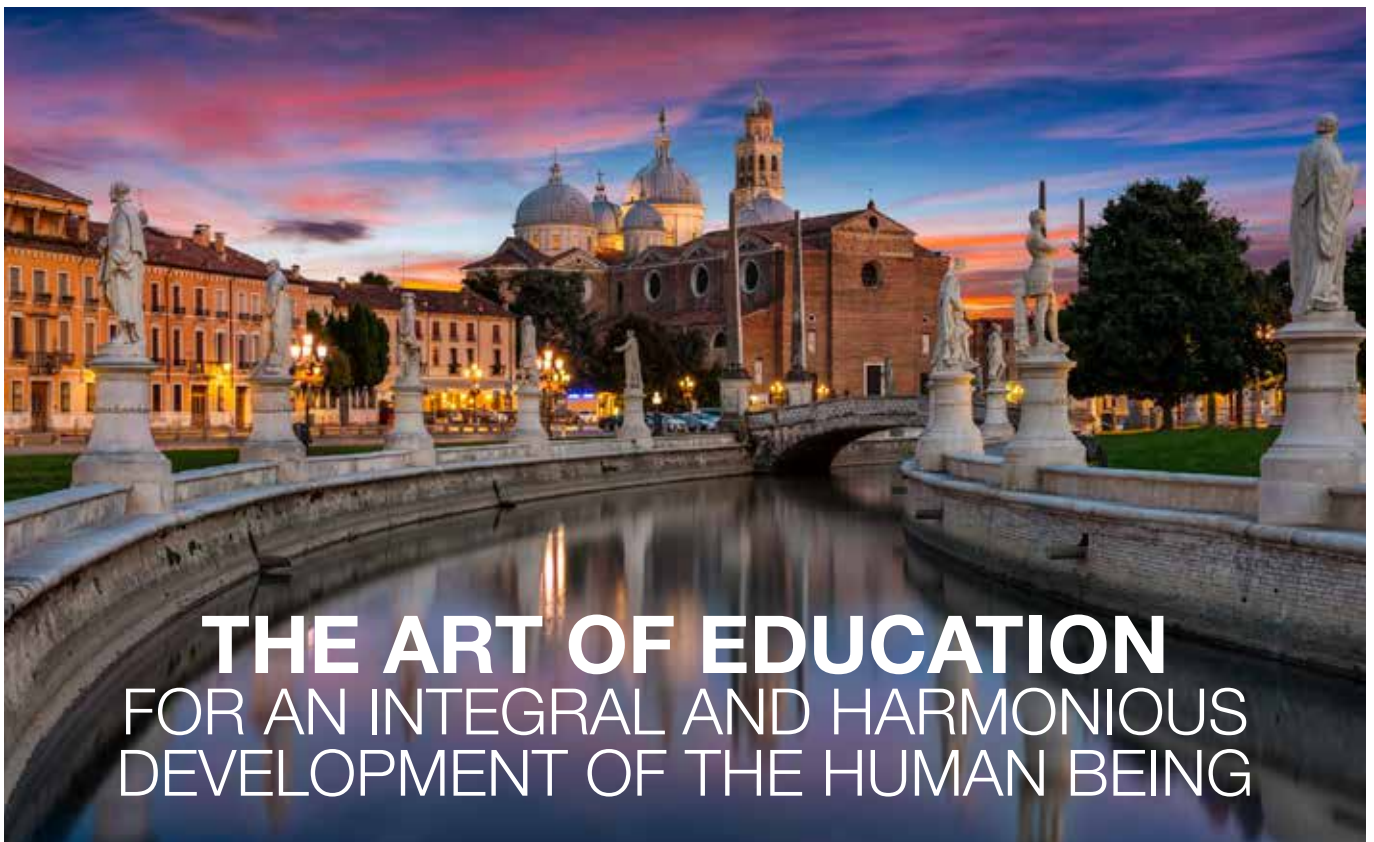
But there is still so much to be done ...

A final educational suggestion that has always guided me in my work as an educator and that I would like to share with all of you is the one found in Assagioli's text "Art of living and living as art" which says "*Everyone can and must make of the living material of his personality, no matter whether marble, clay or gold, an object of beauty in which his transpersonal Self can adequately manifest itself*".

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to those who participated in the Congress, to those who gave the speeches and workshops, to those who worked on the organization and management of the event, to the collaborators of the Padua Centre, to those who worked humbly and silently "behind the scenes".

Cinzia Ghidini

Director of the Psychosynthesis Center of Padova



MARIA MONTESSORI AND ROBERTO ASSAGIOLI: PARALLELS IN THEIR THINKING

Translated by Greta Bianchi / Carolina Montessori

Two years ago, my dear friend Rosa Giudetti, the president of the Montessori Association in Brescia, told me that she was researching the similarities between the insights of Maria Montessori and Roberto Assagioli.



She wanted to know whether there were any references to psychosynthesis in the Maria Montessori Archives, of which I am the curator. I had to confess that I had never even heard of Assagioli and that there were no materials about him or psychosynthesis in the archives. This did not disturb Rosa in the least; she continued her research at the Assagioli Archives in Florence. There she discovered a short message from Maria Montessori to Assagioli and four articles written by him, which had been published in the *Montessori* bulletin in 1931.

As a rule I only speak at Montessori events, but because my father was a psychoanalyst who dedicated much of his free time to the promotion of Montessori, I feel a kind of kinship with - you practitioners of psychosynthesis - because both the Montessori principles and psychology have been fundamental parts of my childhood, of my life. Even though I knew nothing of Roberto Assagioli and his philosophy, I accepted the invitation of Carmen Giovansana, the director of the Centre of Psychosynthesis in Brescia and Bergamo, to speak at the XXXVth National Congress of Psychosynthesis.

I began to read up on Assagioli's life and work and was struck by the similarities between his life and that of Maria Montessori. Born in 1870, Montessori was eighteen years older than Assagioli. But looking back

after so many years, we can consider them almost contemporaries. Both grew up in a newly unified nation marked by many challenges, but it also was a fascinating period for young people, witnessing the emergence of new sciences and inventions. Montessori felt the need to improve the conditions of her compatriots: she supported the need for social justice, especially for women, and better conditions for the disadvantaged children with whom she worked. I imagine that Assagioli must have felt the same urgency to improve the fate of humanity.

Both were medical graduates, with Montessori being among the first female medical doctors in Italy. After their studies, they both chose to work in the field of psychiatry. Soon, Montessori realised that the underprivileged children she worked with in the asylums in Rome were able to learn to a certain extent according to their needs and capacities.

The results achieved with these children were so remarkable that Montessori turned her attention to the reform of traditional child education. Both Assagioli and Montessori shared the belief that education should help children to become harmonious and responsible adults on all levels: physical, emotional, imaginative, intellectual, ethical, social, and intuitive, which would lead to a more peaceful society.

Freedom and independence in the Montessori classroom help children to achieve heightened concentration, the motivation to learn, and a profound engagement, all of which is confirmed today by cognitive sciences. Many of the principles underlying the Montessori method are increasingly validated by contemporary neuroscience. Assagioli eloquently described the atmosphere within a Montessori classroom as a "genuine creative psychosynthesis" profound and beautiful words.

Unlike Montessori, Assagioli never established an educational institution but dedicated his life to the practice of psychosynthesis, primarily working with adults. Nevertheless, as will become evident, there are many striking similarities in their ideas about education. Assagioli was associated with the Theosophical Society, Maria Montessori became a member in 1898, although she never renewed her subscription. However, during the Second World War, she lived with the Theosophists in Adyar, India, where she had been invited to conduct

a training course. Both Assagioli and Montessori met Rabindranath Tagore, the poet and educator, and - along with many others - the three of them were part of a vast holistic educational reform movement.

It is probably not surprising when discussing two Italian intellectuals, but still I was struck by the fact that they both used Dante in their work. Assagioli connected the symbolic significance of *The Divine Comedy* to psychosynthesis, while Montessori used the poem as a literary experiment to study Dante with adolescents aged 12 to 14. This experiment culminated in a theatrical recital of Dante, performed during various events in the early 1930s, and eventually became a model for the study of literature in secondary Montessori schools.

The books published by both Montessori and Assagioli have been translated into multiple languages. The houses they once lived in are thriving centres of their legacy today. Montessori's residence in Amsterdam, where she spent her final years, serves as the headquarters of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), the international organisation founded by Maria Montessori in 1929. AMI's objectives include safeguarding the integrity and quality of the Montessori training, the organisation of training courses in many countries of the world, promoting the Montessori method, and preserving Montessori's legacy. Every year we receive at AMI hundreds of people from all over the world who visit Montessori's study as a kind of pilgrimage. AMI curates the Maria Montessori Archives and it is home to the most comprehensive Montessori library in the world.



We do not know how and where Montessori and Assagioli first met, because after 1915, Montessori never lived for longer periods of time in Italy. She settled instead in Barcelona, even though her life consisted of extensive travels across Europe, America, and India to lecture at numerous courses and congresses. As far as we have been able to determine, the first mention of Assagioli within a Montessori context appeared in the *Montessori* bulletin in January 1931. Montessori evidently held Assagioli in high esteem, as she published his first contribution in the inaugural volume. In all, Assagioli wrote a series of four articles entitled 'Parole franche agli adulti' [Speaking openly to adults], published in 1931 and 1932 in various volumes of the bulletin. While Rosa Giudetti identified these articles at the Assagioli archives in Florence, I later located them in the AMI library. Additionally, Rosa discovered a brief undated letter from Maria Montessori to Assagioli, which reads:

Gentilissimo Prof.
Assagioli,

40 VIA G. B. DE ROSSI
(C.A. MONTESORI) ROMA (CI)

I suoi due scritti mi hanno
interessato profondamente. Non è
forte un dovere associare i nostri
interessi? un dovere verso l'umanità?
Vorrei avere altri suoi scritti - 6/

Archivi Assagioli - Firenze © Istituto G. Piccolini

*Dear Professor Assagioli,
Your two articles interest me profoundly. Isn't it our
duty to work together? It seems a duty to humanity.
I would like to read more of your writings, which I
intend to contemplate during your stay in America - as
if preparing for your return. I am leaving on Monday
evening for Spain. Perhaps, if you find the time, we can
meet before my departure. In that case, please phone
me.*

Sincerely, Maria Montessori

It's very interesting to read that Maria Montessori, known for being fiercely independent and protective of her educational approach, proposed to join forces I have never read this elsewhere. This letter vividly demonstrates her immense respect for Assagioli.

The fourth article by Assagioli was published in the beginning of 1932. It ends with the following sentence, 'In our next article, we will explore the implications that can and should be drawn from the study of psychological types for educational practice, in line with the spirit of the Montessori method.'

However, there are no further articles written by Assagioli in the *Montessori* bulletin nor have we have found any further correspondence. Nonetheless, Mario, the son of Maria Montessori, wrote in his obituary of Roberto Assagioli in 1974 that Assagioli visited Montessori at the Royal Montessori Training College in Rome, where they discussed the need for the spiritual preparation of the adult. This meeting must have taken place in the late 1920s or early 1930s. According to Mario, the two never met again after the war, although they resumed contact as soon as Montessori returned to Europe after her internment in India. This is very interesting, because there are still quite a few boxes containing documents from Maria Montessori at AMI waiting to be explored; therefore, it is not excluded that we may find some letters from Assagioli among them.

After his mother's death, Mario remained in contact with Assagioli. In the obituary he writes that he and the President of AMI were members of the Advisory Board of the Psychosynthesis Research Foundation, created and directed by Assagioli.

So much for the similarities in the lives of Montessori and Assagioli.

I shall now discuss Assagioli's first article published in the *Montessori* bulletin by comparing Assagioli's words with what Montessori wrote on the same topic. I am deeply indebted to Rosa Giudetti for her invaluable help with this part of my talk.

Maria Montessori and Roberto Assagioli both strongly

believe that adults are incapable of understanding children and adolescents, and that through their behaviour and actions they can cause great harm to children.

Assagioli writes, 'We should be deeply ashamed and remorseful about this sad truth: *we do not understand the child and the adolescent at all*; far from helping, as we often delude ourselves into thinking, *we hinder them in their formation and development*.'

In many of her writings, Maria Montessori repeatedly criticises the incapacity of adults to recognise the characteristics of the child's mind and the tendency of adults to interpret the child's aims and needs which are so very different from their own; adults see these as mistakes to be corrected, which gives rise to a real battle between the strong and the weak, a war between the adult and the child, a battle that is carried out in the family and in school, in the form that we still define as 'education'.

In her book *The Child in the Family* Montessori writes, 'The wide diffusion of our method has generated schools in every country and among people widely diverse in custom and culture. This testifies to the universality of the dissension between child and adult that oppresses the human being from the moment of his birth and is all the more dangerous in that it is unconscious.'

Both were aware of the tragic consequences of the adults' inadequacy as educators. In his article, Roberto Assagioli divides the victims of what he calls 'vital impairments and mutilations' caused by the pedagogical inadequacy of adults towards children and adolescents into three categories: the crushed, the repressed, and the rebels. He writes, 'The effects of our blindness are disastrous. It causes failures and unhappiness on a large scale in both children and adults: it can lead to nervous and mental illnesses and even to serious crimes and suicide.'

Maria Montessori writes in *Education and Peace*, 'The failure, the weakling, the slave, and the arrested personality are, in short, always the products of an education that is a blind struggle between the strong and the weak.'

Both are aware of the transference of these evils to future generations. In Assagioli's words,

'(...) these evils do not stop with the individual; they spread around to his family and the society; they multiply over time.'

Maria Montessori writes in *Education and Peace*,

'Man's life thus begins with an unconscious battle between the adult and the child; and as one generation follows another, man continues to be not a well-developed being but a deformed one, a person far from the ideal of the normal man with a personality balanced in its intellectual and affective aspects.'

Like Maria Montessori, Assagioli confirms the great responsibility of adults towards children because love alone is not enough to provide adequate answers to their needs. Assagioli writes,

'[...] precisely those who often sincerely love them are responsible for their harm and ruin.'

How is that possible? The primary cause is the fundamental and harmful illusion that "loving one's children is enough to know how to properly raise and educate them". This conviction is so deeply rooted, especially in mothers, that any attempt to challenge it, or even just question it, provokes passionate reactions and violent protests.'

Maria Montessori writes in *Maria Montessori speaks to parents*, 'If we persist in saying "Mother knows best", and try to form their growing intellects and characters by our own standards, we shall succeed only in destroying self-discipline, we shall break the child's power of concentration by trying to focus his attention on matters which he is not yet interested in, and he will grow deceitful if we insist too harshly.'

Like Maria Montessori, Assagioli emphasises the urgency with which adults must change their behaviour towards children. There is no time to waste if we want to save the fate of humanity which is rapidly heading towards self-destruction and the destruction of our planet.

Roberto Assagioli states,

'First we must realise the seriousness and urgency of the matter, and we must do so honestly, courageously, without fear of hurting our feelings, our pride, our adultegotism.'

Maria Montessori writes,

'Humanity has fallen sick, like an organism suffering from a circulatory disease; man is weak and unhappy. Yet he continues to pursue his irresistible mission, and humanity is now united as one single nation. And man, that feeble and unhappy creature, may be cured if he so wills. He need only open his eyes, rectify his errors, and realize his powers. When we say that man must intensify the means of communication and interchange available to him, we are pointing to a goal that he cannot attain immediately. Humanity must first be convinced of the urgency of attaining this goal. Man must be educated.'

Maria Montessori and Roberto Assagioli share the belief that education is the path to salvation; they believe that the adult is able to educate himself and others, and by so doing create a new kind of humanity. Roberto Assagioli writes, "The causes of evil are, therefore, many and serious, but they should not lead us to discouragement followed by inaction. It is *possible to eliminate them*. And since it is possible, *it is our duty to do so*.'

Maria Montessori writes,

'It is true that education can create a better kind of man, but this is a vast undertaking. It is a labour that may well take along time, but it will none the less be brief in comparison with the work that man has already accomplished.'

Roberto Assagioli writes on this same subject,

'Fortunately, the human spirit is adaptable, and the same flexibility that caused deformations can also correct and heal.'

Maria Montessori writes in *Il metodo del bambino e la formazione dell'uomo*,

'Rest assured that if I hadn't been certain that humanity can be improved, I wouldn't have had the strength to fight for fifty years, repeatedly restarting the work that others had destroyed. At my age, I wouldn't have had the energy to keep traveling the world, advocating this truth.'

Both emphasise the importance for adults to work on themselves: they should shed their pre judices regarding children and deviant tendencies that jeopardise the

educational relationship.

Roberto Assagioli: 'This work of prevention and care, however, requires *adults to seriously work on themselves*. [...] Indeed, we must first work on understanding and controlling ourselves, even before our children and students, to liberate us from ignorance, from slavery, from suffering; it will result in a clear conscience with which we can also face others, and God.'

Maria Montessori in *The Absorbent Mind*:

'It is often we who obstruct the child, and so become responsible for anomalies that last a lifetime. Always must our treatment be as gentle as possible, avoiding violence, for we easily fail to realize how violent and hard we are being. We have to watch ourselves most carefully. The real preparation for education is a study of one's self. The training of the teacher who is to help life is something far more than a learning of ideas. It includes the training of character; it is a preparation of the spirit.'

To conclude, I would like to say that I have been struck by the many similarities between Montessori and Assagioli. Both have become famous far beyond the borders of their native country. Each founded a movement that, many years after their deaths, is still recognised, discussed, and applied worldwide. Two great personalities, two pioneers very close in their thinking, who each in their own way dedicated their lives to the betterment of humanity.

Carolina Montessori

Responsible for the preservation and editing of the pedagogical archive of M. Montessori Amsterdam - AMI

Archive photos were provided courtesy of the Maria Montessori archives - AMI





Carolina Montessori's contribution to the National Congress of the Institute of Psychosynthesis 2023 is being published posthumously.

Carolina sadly passed away on 7 April last.

The Montessori community throughout the world mourns her passing.

With her we lose an important point of reference, a luminous and irreplaceable guide to the life and work of her great-grandmother Maria Montessori, but above all we mourn the loss of a sincere, generous and kind friend.

Carolina had participated in the National Congress of the Institute of Psychosynthesis with great pleasure and with a sincere desire to deepen her understanding of Assagioli's thought and his commitment, common to that of her great-grandmother, for the betterment of humanity.

Her memory and her desire to bear witness to the Montessori principles with her work and her own life will always remain alive.

Rosa Giudetti
President of the Brescia Montessori Association

EDUCABILITY OF THE ELDERLY



Translated by Alberto Gabba/ Gordon Leonard Symons

Educability of the elderly is the title of a chapter in the book “*Knowing Oneself*” by Angela Maria La Sala Batà, one of Assagioli’s student. Here I take up and elaborate the points she made on this theme, integrating it with Assagioli’s writings.

In old age there is certainly a physiological decay of the human being from the biological point of view, with even significant physical limitations, but this decline is not necessarily accompanied by a decrease in moral, intellectual, relational, social capabilities nor by a lack of existential planning.

The individual has the possibility of continuing his own evolution throughout his life, working not only on strengthening new learning and his own creativity, but also on the expansion and elevation of consciousness.

Already in the 1600s, a Belgian pedagogue, Comenius, stated that education must be extended to all phases of life, including education to old age, in old age, and up to death.

Many centuries before, Socrates, the Socratics and other philosophers such as Epictetus and Plotinus, stated that education, understood as self-training, lasts a lifetime: searching for self-knowledge, wisdom, self-transformation, taking care of one’s soul so that it acquires the best possible form, elevating oneself towards dimensions of consciousness and superior, spiritual values.

Assagioli tells us that *even when life ceases to be a promise, it does not cease to be a task.*

And Marsilio Ficino: *when external activity slows down, so internal activity increases.*

How can Psychosynthesis help older people recognize the importance and evolutionary meaning of the phase they are experiencing? Educational and training work can be deployed along four main lines:

1. **Continue with one’s own personal psychosynthesis.** At 74, Assagioli said: “I am carrying out my psychosynthesis”. The work of *Know, Own, Transform Yourself*, continues until the last breath; even dying becomes the last great opportunity for growth. Identify parts of yourself that are still unknown, neglected or repressed; develop underdeveloped functions and superior qualities; know how to manage impulses and emotions better and better; practice detachment, disidentification and self-identification. Go beyond attachments and identifications in the roles experienced throughout life; discover new talents and interests. Work on one’s ideal model and on Will in the psychosynthetic sense. Broaden awareness on our different dimensions: bodily, affective-relational, cognitive-existential, existential. The bodily dimension with non-judgmental attention focused on the breath and the various parts of the body; the affective-relational one with the focus on emotions, feelings, relationships; the cognitive-existential one as a continuous narrative of ourselves to be shared in the group; the existential one as re-signification,

attribution of meaning to our existence, awareness of the values and the fundamental desire that have guided, motivated, animated and given meaning to life; and finally as awareness of death. It is also important to implement the synthesis of previous ages, integrating the qualities of the child such as simplicity and spontaneity, trust, openness to the world, joy, amazement, playfulness; the passion, idealism, courage of the adolescent; the enthusiasm and dynamism of the young man; the balance and maturity of the adult; the detachment, calm, skills and wisdom resulting from various life experiences in old age.

2. **Psychological maturity.** La Sala Batà writes: *“True psychological maturity consists in an internal attitude towards oneself, towards others and towards life, which pushes one to always move forward, to broaden one’s horizons and to reach ever higher states of consciousness”*. Rather than remaining attached and closed to the past in a sterile manner, the mature person retraces life experiences seeking what he may have learned from them; every experience, even painful, can represent a learning opportunity and can build that wisdom, that set of skills, which becomes a legacy to the world, to new generations, as an individual inheritance, as a sowing of new possibilities for existence. A wisdom that is also nourished by dialogue with others, with peers and with new generations, by openness and discussion with different points of view. Self-training cannot ignore the relationship with others, moving away from a solipsistic, nostalgic or resentful vision, in order to increasingly broaden one’s knowledge of oneself, exercise self-reflection, and always identify new ways of self-realization. In the 1970s we began to talk about geragogy, that is, the psychopedagogy of aging which, arising from gerontology, aims at the prevention of mental, physical and social decay; helps the elderly to identify new existential goals that allow them to lead an active life. Through education it is possible to offer the elderly those skills of awareness, self-efficacy and self-determination on which socially active action is based.

The psychologically mature person is in a continuous dialogue with existence, open to the mutability of events and to others. He is continuously in an attitude of learning, but does not consider the truths acquired as definitive and absolute, he is always willing to explore the new, to cultivate what is defined “a nomadic thought”, as the philosopher Luigina Mortari writes, *“a thought capable of crossing landscapes and different cultures and of being open to dialogue with others.”*

3. **Discover the centre of self-awareness and open up to the Transpersonal Self.** Thanks to the exercise of disidentification and self-identification, the elderly person is increasingly attracted towards that deep, essential, perennial, spiritual centre, which remains stable, immutable, permanent, the Transpersonal Self. Just when physical strength begins to decline, the elderly person has the opportunity to focus attention towards a deeper and more elevated, spiritual inner dimension. We increasingly deal with what is essential, detaching ourselves from what is accessory and superficial, also accepting our own fragility and vulnerability. In this case, educational work involves developing higher qualities such as trust and hope, gratitude, love, joy, compassion, all those superior qualities that Assagioli defined as psychic medicine and which nourish the vital energy of the person, its harmonization, even when physical strength is in decline, while negative thoughts and emotions consume vital energy. It becomes important to cultivate spiritual practices by applying different techniques:
 - mind concentration techniques, to give attention and live in the present moment.
 - lightening techniques, in order to free the mind from everything that is not essential.
 - subtraction techniques: it is no longer the time of doing, of producing, but it is the time of stillness, of interior silence, of giving oneself time.
 - relaxation techniques, to free the mind from thoughts that disturb and hold in their grip, preventing serenity.
 - remembrance techniques, to bring past

EVEN WHEN LIFE CEASES TO BE A PROMISE, IT DOES NOT CEASE TO BE A TASK

experiences to the light of consciousness in order to understand them and reconcile with them. In old age, what is called *gerotranscendence* occurs; the transition from a materialistic and rational vision to a more cosmic and transcendental one, which is accompanied by serenity and peace of mind. There is a loss of interest in material things, a greater need for meditation, for inner silence; the individual experiences a sense of cosmic communion with the spirit of the Universe, a redefinition of time, space, life and death.

The term transcendence, Joan Erickson writes, can be transformed into *Transcendance, which speaks to the soul and body and which challenges it to rise above the dystonic and dependent aspects of our earthly existence.*

Transcendence can represent a recovery of lost skills, such as play, joy, trust, openness to the unknown, including going beyond the fear of death. Every step becomes a challenge, an exercise of will.

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4. **Educate about death and dying.** When in a 1970 interview Assagioli was asked how he thought about death and in particular about his own, he replied: *“I neither desire nor fear the death of my body, since I am deeply convinced not only of survival, but above all of the perpetuity of life. I am convinced that the “spiritual core”, which is the essence of ourselves, is immortal and that its manifestations will be renewed with an ever wider awareness and an ever greater creative power.”* Nowadays the topic of death is a taboo subject, which we try to exorcise in various ways. The person, especially the elderly, must be educated to shift attention from a materialistic vision, for which external appearance, power, success, material goods and other ordinary concerns are important, to becoming aware, through the exercise of disidentification and self-identification, of that Transpersonal nucleus, the Self, which by its nature is eternal and immutable, since it participates in universal life. Everything loses importance when

faced with the discovery of this interior dimension, which entails new values, new psycho-spiritual energies. The gaze is focused on what is essential, on the present moment, which is lived with fullness and intensity of life and becomes the time of the eternal. Death reminds us that existence cannot be postponed, that every moment deserves to be lived fully, consciously, in the love and joy of being here; may we be grateful and appreciate the countless gifts and possibilities of existence. We ask ourselves what we have learned from this existence and what we leave to the world; what type of energy do we spread into the Universe as a personal legacy of our existence? Death is the last great opportunity for learning, meaning, beauty and value of existence, both for those who die and for those who accompany them.

Maria Teresa Marraffa
*Physician, Psychotherapist, Trainer of the Institute
of Psychosynthesis*

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10TH INTERNATIONAL MEETING AT CASA ASSAGIOLI



Translated by Donatella Randazzo / Gordon Leonard Symons

The Institute of Psychosynthesis reopened its doors to the International Meeting, hosting the 10th edition from Thursday 28 September to Sunday 1 October 2023.

The following text, rather than a detailed account of what happened during the days of the Meeting, contains my impressions and notes, having engaged myself in the organization of this important event for the first time, together with the Group that created and realized it in previous years.

On the evening of September 27, everything at Casa Assagioli seemed to be in its place: on the first floor, the furniture and furnishings in Assagioli's study and the adjoining rooms were shiny and almost sparkling, with floors and carpets smelling clean. The evocative words set on the table of the central room quiver to deliver their quality to the newcomers. The archive files are waiting to be found, browsed and read in order to offer words

and phrases of wisdom, cooperation and friendship.

On the ground floor, the books of the historical library are eager to share and explain to readers the many interests of the founder of psychosynthesis and pioneer of the psychology of the soul.

A flight further down, on the garden level, the large room is preparing to welcome the group of people who will place themselves in a circle, while the tables await to be opened in the courtyard to offer good vegetarian food to the group. Coffee, tea, coasters, biscuits are arranged on the support tables inside, to cheer up and lighten the tension of the participants' research and study.

We talked about *freedom* in our invitation letter. From what? From Covid, the agent of separation that forced us to suspend the International Meeting for three years, from 2020 to 2022. We reiterated it: *freedom* at the center of our group work, *freedom* to express oneself, to renew, to share.

In the coming days, will we be able to create an atmosphere of *freedom* and thus keep our promise?

On the morning of September 28th, from 9am, on time, our dear guests arrive: some are here for the first time, others are already familiar with the places and rhythms of the house. It is summer-like weather, luckily Florence offers a nice pleasant warmth that allows us to stay outdoors and enjoy the sun and light.

The cheerful voices of the participants spread through the rooms, some already knowing each other, others meeting in person for the first time.

There are twenty-two people, including the last one who arrives at the end of the morning, and they come from all over the world: Belgium, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States. Together with the seven of us, collaborators of the Gruppo alle Fonti organizer of the event, we are almost thirty people, united by a passion for psychosynthesis. But also by a common search for the psychosynthetic energy and spirit still present in the small sheets of paper in the archives, full of words of love and wisdom for the human race, in the pages of the books underlined with red pencil, full of annotations and cross-references to texts by other authors, companions of Roberto Assagioli in sowing Good in the hearts of men.

Thanks to these sources, everybody can be inspired and according to their individual note, contribute to composing that symphony for the benefit of humanity, considered so urgent and important by Assagioli himself.

The activities begin, the group is formed, connections are created, everyone introduces themselves, shares the purpose of their presence and also some expectations for the days to come.

The tour of the house follows, once the home of Roberto Assagioli, whose rooms are now entirely destined to preserving and making accessible his cultural and spiritual heritage. Only his studio has remained intact, and on crossing its threshold you have the impression of entering a special place, where the founder's imprint is still vibrant and palpable.

Some friends already know which topics to explore, so they immediately head towards the materials of interest. Others rely on the creative tools developed over the years by the Alle Fonti Group, aimed at facilitating the perception of ideas and inspiration for new personal study and research paths. In the afternoon of the first day, all the participants have found a place where they can read, write, think and meditate, free to sit there through the following days, as well as to take part in one or more of the scheduled activities.

The pleasure of breathing in an atmosphere of freedom is expressed by those who appreciate being able to go, whenever they wish, from the first floor to the garden level, to find comfort with drinks and snacks, indulge in a nice chat with other friends, have some sharing, ask for advice, get clarifications.





The “declared” quality of freedom is accompanied by a second one, now equally perceptible in the Meeting space: *service*. Having service stratified in the building since the very beginning of the Institute’s life, now, in a “beneficial contagion” manner, it manifests itself: in small daily activities in the form of a joyful offer of help from everyone in washing up, or in spontaneous collaboration when opening and closing tables for meals, as well as in moving chairs from the courtyard to the central room.

In actual fact, the spirit of service had already presented itself during the organizing of the meeting, in the previous months, with the proposal from two participants to lead a free workshop each, as a further stimulus to be included in the program, and later, with the offer by a third one to give an historical/artistic presentation on the occasion of the planned excursion.

The proposals developed in spirit of service do take place: the first workshop, on Friday afternoon, is dedicated to a main theme in psychosynthesis - unity in diversity – and is based on an article by Assagioli. The second workshop, focused on Assagioli and its cultural context, is held on Saturday afternoon. Both are appreciated by a large part of the group, while a few others choose (freely) to continue studying and reading.

Saturday is the busiest day: in the morning the scheduled visit to the Dominican Convent in Fiesole takes place, accompanied by its guided presentation offered as a service, as we said, by a participant. The excursion ends at the tiny Chapel of the Beatitudes, outdoors, at the far end of the convent’s splendid olive grove. Some time for an intimate contact with one’s Self is proposed, inspired by Roberto Assagioli’s words from his spiritual diary:

[...] always feel and reaffirm your being a Soul, a center of spiritual consciousness [...]

After lunch, the group meets with Piero Ferrucci who, in spirit of service, had met our request to present Assagioli's vision on various aspects of the future: cultural, religious, psychological, etc. Through a warm conversation much appreciated by the participants, he offers stimuli for an optimistic view of the future in which - this is the hope – the Soul of every nation will be recognized, as a preliminary process to the unification of the human race.

After dinner, having received various inputs during the day and perhaps requiring quietness and time for processing them, most participants prefer silence and meditation to the celebrations scheduled in the program. Only a small contingent stays longer to socialize, dance and have some light-hearted time.

On Sunday morning the time for farewells and final sharing arrives: the group members generously express the thoughts and emotions they carry in their heart. Many feel a sense of gratitude for the experience, together with the awareness that Assagioli's legacy held in the house is like a box yet to be explored. For some, being at the Institute means returning to their roots or realizing to be in the right place and time to intuit new paths to pursue.

Others share their coming out of curiosity, and letting the words, yet to be understood, found in the *assagiolini*,⁽¹⁾ resonate in their minds; or state how strongly they felt the call of the House, after decades of practicing psychosynthesis, to set out with courage on a journey despite their temporary disability. And still someone who, in a silence devoid of expectations, perceived Assagioli's spirit and the heartfelt connection with the companions of a group that had operated exclusively online; other participants said to have received new ideas from the esoteric and transpersonal sector of the library, in a flow of love and joy; or expressed their having enjoyed the company of the group sharing the same interest in psychosynthesis; or gave voice to their will to keep alive the fire found in the words "Power, Love and Light" of the prayer of the Great Invocation; or perceived how being is more important than doing,

while feeling the qualities of generosity, creativity and harmony vibrate strongly. Someone speaks of generosity, accompanied by gratitude, in the glory of interior action, while another underlines the nourishment received from library books, as a stimulus for research and writing. And finally others recalled the word freedom, or underlined their finding a treasure chest made of trust and beauty, or appreciated the privilege of being able to find themselves in this place.

For the Casa Assagioli staff the experience was deep: the exchange with our friends strengthened the group's spirit of service and the motivation to continue the work of spreading and making available Roberto Assagioli's heritage.

My brief notes on the 10th International Meeting end with the words written by some participants in the visit book held in Roberto Assagioli's studio. The original sentences are all signed, but here they are reported as anonymous:

- Thank you Gruppo alle Fonti, for opening the doors to this house, Casa Assagioli, with all the treasures that you have made available to me and so many others in the worldwide psychosynthesis community. For me, it always feels like I'm coming 'home' to Psychosynthesis when I'm here. For you, I brought a blessing from the book *To bliss the space between us* by John O'Donohue:

- "To come home to yourself
May all that is unforgiven in you be released
May your fears yield
Their deepest tranquilities
May all that is un-lived in you
Blossom into a future
Graced with love."
With much gratitude and love.

- So here I am, in the office of R. Assagioli, writing how grateful I am to be here, to read here, to meet other beautiful souls in this spiritual and amazing surroundings, creative and soulful jam in the middle of Florence. Thank you for this opportunity and privilege to

get in touch with the Source! Love and Will is definitely the Way.

- My soul led me here to bathe in the wisdom of Roberto and all the teachings that he shone the light on are refreshed here in the Welcome and generosity of you all. Thank you for the experience. Joy, enthusiasm and love. Grazie.

- Thank you Gruppo alle Fonti for this unique and visceral experience, for the love and dedication infused in keeping this place alive and vibrant, and the joy you express in welcoming new visitors hungry for truth. We will have to come back because this can only be the beginning with so much material!

- Sifting through the snippets and bits of paper that are held with such care in this place, I can feel Roberto Assagioli is very much alive. In the connections between souls and the synaptic leaps to meaning that this archive and Institute enable, the universal evolutionary principles of synthesis continue and coalesce in each of us! I feel renewed by my experience here and reconnected to a spirit that lives through me. *Grazie mille a tutti per questa esperienza.*

- To be given the honour and privilege of entering this one of a kind sacred space, and to be allowed to work with the materials of the archives is a once in a lifetime gift. My soul is alive and fully nourished. Thank you!

- Roberto, I love seeing the twinkle in your eyes and your beautiful smile! Thank you so much for such an enjoyable and beautiful space. Warmest wishes.

- Signor Assagioli, to spend time in your beautiful space is such an honour and a privilege and to meet you all at the source inspires and enlightens my soul. It's my first visit and I know it will not be my last. Thank you for awakening my soul and leading the way ... on this beautiful life journey.

- Roberto Assagioli Thank you from the bottom of my heart and the depths of my soul for leading me here ...

(unfortunately, the handwriting is illegible)

- Thank you Casa Assagioli and AlleFonti Staff to have made it possible to look at all these writings, the snippets, the bits of paper as well, lesson notes and libraries. It feels like doing archaeology into the mind of Roberto Assagioli and it stirs my own mind.

Mille grazie.

Donatella Randazzo
*Biologist Nutritionist, Librarian and Trainer
of the Institute of Psychosynthesis*

Notes

1. *Assagiolini* = Small piece of paper hand written by Roberto Assagioli.

NOTES FROM AN ARCHAEOLOGIST'S DIARY

Prologue - 1993

I am working as a manager for a mental health charity supporting patients who at times experience severe psychological disturbance and fragmentation from consensus reality. As part of my training for this work I come across psychosynthesis and discover another way of being with this disturbance, another way of seeing and experiencing that acknowledges the psyche, the soul that exists even in the most unsettling of human conditions. It is a soul that seeks to free itself from the disturbance caused by the biological and psychological past and that seeks to live at ease with itself. This discovery eventually leads me to further training in psychosynthesis.

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September 2023 – Situated Knowledge

It is a cold, dark, wet, and very windy early morning in Edinburgh as we board a flight to Florence. The plane shakes, buffeted by the wind, as we take off. 30 years have passed since that first job in mental health. Since then, I have completed training in psychosynthesis psychotherapy, clinical supervision and a foundation in group analysis and taught for 10 years at the Institute of Psychosynthesis in London. I no longer teach but I continue to have a full private practice but now with less unsettled patients than in my earlier years and offer supervision to psychotherapists and counsellors. I have embarked on research into the concepts of Roberto Assagioli and Wilfred Bion through a postmodern lens.

We land in bright sunshine and the heat warms us as we step onto the airport apron. The contrast with Scotland couldn't be greater. I notice the different trees, gardens, architecture, the dusty park where children kick a ball. I arrive at a grand Italian villa where lunch has just been served and join a small group of 24 people all here for the 10th International Gathering with its theme of Freedom. It is midday and, still catching up with myself, I am shown into the garden and am asked to state my purpose as I add a stone from Scotland to a bowl. I have seen this garden before in a YouTube video interview with Roberto Assagioli. It is different from what I have in mind. It is drier, fewer plants, more sunlight, and

annoyingly mosquitoes. I notice the yellow villas up on the hill, the cypresses pointing to the blue sky above and go back inside.



Why am I here? A short sojourn into PhD research introduced me to postmodern thinking that places the researcher in a web of multiple and intricate relationships, not just with other human beings or the ecology but with the material world as well. This has been called *situated knowledge* (Haraway, 2016) and it suggests that what we know and how we know is determined by where we are and who and what we are with. Rather than looking for information or knowledge from Assagioli's writing in the Archives I wanted to discover what new thoughts would come to me by placing myself here where psychosynthesis was born.

For a while I sit in Assagioli's study and notice the bookcases, the faded spines of books with some surprises in amongst them, Carlos Castaneda, Chögyam Trungpa, Suzuki, and Krishnamurti, old favourites of mine. I sit on the chair next to the big, dark wooden desk with a book and objects on it. Diffracted light comes in through the half-open shutters. There are some faded prints by Nicholas Roerich on one wall, another old friend, and on the wall across from the desk some photographs including Nella, his wife. I notice the worn brown couch in front of it and ask myself 'is this for the patient?' In the warmth of the afternoon while quite tired from my long journey here my thoughts start to drift.

THAT ULTIMATE REALITY CANNOT BE KNOWN, IT CAN ONLY BECOME

First, I find myself thinking about the young men and women who came to study with Assagioli in the 1960s and 70s. Seekers, eager to be with and learn from this wise man who by then was well into his seventies. I saw myself travelling East in those years and similarly looking for spiritual teachers who might offer me a different perspective from the one I had grown up with. I noticed the boxes tied with green ribbons in bows to close them, containing individual little yellow folders which fold open to reveal faded, discoloured scraps of writing on yellowed paper. Some of these yellow pages and little notes have just a few words on it, others short paragraphs, quotes from other writers, references to books and page numbers. Some are written in Italian, others in English or German. All is held in great reverence, and I am reminded of the libraries in Tibetan monasteries I had visited in India close to 50 years ago, reminded of the time spent translating texts and wrapping scriptures in red cloth to protect them for the future. Both then and now, everything preserved, everything holding importance, almost sacred.

Next, my thoughts drift to the patients who might have entered the room to visit the good doctor behind the desk looking for a cure, for healing on the couch, who came to visit "*the doctor who worked miracles*". Later on Pierro Ferrucci, who studied with Assagioli in his later years, would tell us with warmth about his experience of seeing depressed and gloomy patients enter and leaving lighter and uplifted by being in the presence of Assagioli after just one visit. What I hear in this is the unique experience the patients had when meeting Assagioli the doctor and man rather than the slowly developing relationship between psychotherapist and patient that most of us work with. I look at this warm room and find myself rearranging the furniture, moving the big desk to the side under a window, replacing the couch with two comfy chairs closer together. I imagine how I would be practicing here in Casa Assagioli, not being separated from the patient by a desk or even having a desk so dominant in the middle of the room. I find my thoughts carry me forward in time and place, thinking about my room in grey, cold Edinburgh and the patients who come to see me there in 2023. I think about the different

quality of the relational experience that is co-created between me and my patients compared to the one of Roberto Assagioli and his patients 50 to 100 years ago.

In his notes Assagioli has suggested that 'the role of the psychotherapist is a representative of the Self, the link to the Self.' He wrote that '*the goodness of therapy is the goodness of the relationship*'. The first statement perhaps unique to psychosynthesis while the second relates to any psychotherapeutic approach. He also touches on spiritual instruction with a manuscript reference that says, "*there must be a complete transference or delegation of one's problem to the power from which help is desired. Spiritual power works by putting ideas into the hearts of men.*" Reading these documents I am struck by the entangling of the spiritual with the psychological and the psychotherapeutic in Assagioli's way of working. It makes me think about the transference relationship where early life experiences can get re-enacted between psychotherapist and patient and this being coloured by the complexity of the spiritual teacher and disciple relationship.

A couple of days later we saunter up the road in glorious early morning sunshine to visit San Domenico's Church and Monastery just outside of Florence. As I enter the sacristy and see the priest's vestments laid out, I have a strange visceral experience. I am reminded of the times I spent as an altar boy still in primary school and how I was part of the transformation that takes place when an ordinary man puts on robes and through this becomes the channel between the congregation and the divine. It was a mysterious ritual that I was part of but that was never fully explained to me. From a religious perspective I was expected to trust what was taking place and to have faith in it. Here in a church, I think of Assagioli's comment that the psychotherapist is the link with the Self and similarly that the priest is the link with God. Although psychosynthesis is not a spiritual path the language it uses is close to that spoken by spiritual teachers.

Later we venture out into the monastery olive grove where Donatella leads us through a guided meditation. I walk in amongst the trees while reflecting on the visceral

experience and this blurring of the psychotherapeutic with the spiritual. Dried olives lie in amongst the trees. I can hear bees buzzing as they bring the nectar to their hives. In one corner of the garden an apple tree has shed its fruit onto the stony ground. Slowly I get a greater sense of peace, stillness than the church, religion and the memories of rituals could offer me.

Back at Casa Assagioli, sitting next to Assagioli's desk I wonder again about the psychotherapist-patient relationship and how different that was in Assagioli's time. In those days psychotherapists tended to be doctors and psychiatrists who were often held in great esteem creating a specific transference dynamic. Doctors were seen to hold knowledge, authority, and wisdom while patients were more likely to follow up on their guidance and instructions. Over 100 hundred years have passed since Assagioli first formulated his ideas and his way of practising psychotherapy. I think about the different world we live in now, a world of much greater diversity and polarisation, a world perhaps even more unsafe and more uncertain. We live in a world where authority is questioned and where we are suspicious of authority figures.

In the days that follow, Gordon Symons presents a new translation of one of Assagioli's papers called Unity in Diversity which in part addresses my wondering and yet there is something about the language that seems to come drifting in from the past. It is a language that for me is filled with connotations and images of a different time from the complex diffracted world we live in now.

These past few years I have started to consider a different way of working that sees psychotherapy as a co-created relationship where both psychotherapist and patient sit in the not knowing. Bion (Bion, 1970) suggested that the psychotherapist's capacity to let go of memory and desire opens the possibility for transformation from O, ultimate reality, to take place. In my reading of Bion, specifically his later writing, I found him touch on concepts close to Assagioli's. Bion also made references to Martin Buber, eastern philosophy and an undefined knowing that has not come into form yet. Bion suggested that Ultimate Reality cannot be known, it can only become (Bion, 1970). I would add that this is close to a postmodern

perspective on the process of becoming; a process in which the psychotherapist is not the wise doctor who works miracles but is part of change just as much as the patient. It is a process that includes the material world as well, including the room, the building, and the material environment in which becoming takes place.

Archaeology of a man

Sitting in the different rooms at Casa Assagioli I am struck by the quantity of writing that the Archives contain, over 3000 books in the library collected by Assagioli and others until he died in 1974. In another room are even more books related to psychosynthesis that have been published since his death. While another contains filing cabinets with all his teaching notes in various drafts and final forms. A third room contains binders of his esoteric writings and in his study, more bookcases, some containing the boxes of short notes, scraps, magazine articles. I see my new colleagues for these few days silently and intently leafing through the pages and notes. From outside the noise of traffic passing on the road out of Florence up to Fiesole drifts into the room.

In the library I randomly take a book off the shelf by the Russian sociologist Pitrim Sorokin 'The American Sex Revolution' published in 1956, and on the dustcover, I read a review stating that he *warns that our world leadership is threatened by the possibility of complete sex anarchy*. I leaf through the pages of the book and put it back on the shelf with a smile, wondering what Sorokin would think now. This book had a personal dedication to Roberto Assagioli, and I wonder what happened to the sex anarchy that world leaders had to be worried about eighty years ago. There are other more familiar books, "The Way of the White Clouds", "Meditation in Action", and "The Three Pillars of Zen." I search the online catalogue and come across an Italian edition of "Wilfred Bion's Experiences in Groups" (Bion, 1980) and imagine a conversation the two could have had if they had met. Bion's O, the ultimate reality, seemed to me so close to Assagioli's concept of a Transpersonal Self.

Leaving the books in the library I start to explore Assagioli's teaching notes and as I read these, I think of Deleuze and Guatari's (2020) concept that language creates a specific territory that limits our experience of ourselves and the world we live in. Assagioli's is a didactic language, a spiritual language that instructs, directs, and guides. It offers insight into how to lead a meaningful and harmonious life. Assagioli was steeped in this language from birth, through the family and the culture he grew up in. It is interesting to read the psychosynthesis motto "the only way out is the way up" which in this language of height, points our gaze upwards as if in a church or temple. Later, on my flight home I am reading "Creating Harmony in Life" (Assagioli, 2022) with its emphasis on spiritual, practical self-development of the individual that can be attempted without the need for a "competent" other. This contrasts with the language of psychotherapy which I would say is a language that inquires, a language that explores into the inner world. The language of psychotherapy tends to reflect and go deep. A language that does involve another, hopefully competent psychotherapist. Its motto might be "the only way out is the way in".

It is the language that is created in the space between psychotherapist and patient, between self and other. Interestingly Assagioli does refer to this as well by suggesting that there is an approach in psychosynthesis "derived from psychoanalysis". It includes psychoanalytical phases, and this psychoanalytical element/investigation can be returned to throughout treatment "whenever symptoms or forms of resistance have to be eliminated." (Assagioli, 2022). Nonetheless, the emphasis in most of his writing seems to be on the language of self-development, a didactic and instructive language. I am aware of the broad brushstrokes I am painting here of the two distinct applications of psychosynthesis, one for self-development where another is not needed, and the other for psychotherapy which involves two people. I am also aware that these two different types of language and their interweaving seem unique to psychosynthesis as a psychospiritual approach and in this it contrasts with that used in other relational psychotherapy literature.

As the days pass a thought arrives as I look at my colleagues bent over books and papers. I notice how absorbed we are, how enthusiastic and intently we look at notes in the margins of books, words underlined, the little phrases on a scrap of paper and the messages it seems to hold. Each seems a priceless gift from the past. It makes me think of archaeologists and their enthusiasm and excitement when they discover a fragment of bone, a chip of pottery, a shard of glass. I wonder about these archaeologists and how they piece together a life gone by, a period of the past and what they can reveal from it, what knowledge they can glean from it.

We seem to be involved in a similar project in trying to discover more about Roberto Assagioli the man, the wise doctor, the psychotherapist, astrologist, esoteric explorer. We seem to try to add not only to our own understanding but also to what he had left behind as unfinished thinking, ideas, and writing. Here on the shelves in the different rooms of the Archives lie the remains of one man's thinking legacy and our group of archaeologists try to reconstruct and expand on this knowledge. We try to uncover something new from it. Each little piece of writing could contain a gem, a shard of wisdom.

I hold in my hands his paper on "The Construction of the Personality," the typed notes on faded paper and see the imprint of the metal keys of the old typewriter, the distortion of e's and o's hammered into the page. I notice the scoring out of paragraphs with a pen, words added in blue handwriting, red numbering. Other sections of the document are meant to be deleted. Seeing this I imagine the type writing process. I can hear the bell as the carriage reaches the end of each sentence, the rattle as the carriage returns to the left while the roller moves the paper up for the next sentence to be typed. No doubt even before this document was typed up there would have been short notes, scribbles, scraps of paper. Prior to Assagioli making his handwritten notes he would have done his reading, which in research terms, would have been called diffractive reading. It is obvious from his library that his thinking was derived from reading his spiritual, psychological, philosophical, and scientific

AN EVEN HIGHER FORTH PSYCHOLOGY, TRANSPERSONAL, TRANSHUMAN, CENTRED IN THE COSMOS RATHER THAN ON HUMAN NEEDS AND INTERESTS, TRANSCENDING THE HUMAN CONDITION

books, and that this reading would have given rise to new thoughts. Now, close to a hundred years later, I am holding this typed document, a document of its time, not just in what it says but also in how it was produced.

While holding the paper I think about us as archaeologists who are so busy trying to find that arrowhead of Assagioli's thoughts from the past and yet perhaps the greatest discovery would not be a word, phrase or paragraph written by Assagioli, but a new thought unearthed from the great unknown, the thoughts that descend from the Source, the mysterious as Assagioli puts it. By doing this we would unearth and uncover the future.

Archaeology of the future

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Over a week later I am on my flight back north. The snowy tops of the Swiss Alps way down below reflect the sunshine back up to me, a strange upside-down sensation where I must look down to see the tops of mountains. Thinking about my work as a psychotherapist I realise that I am more often in the valley or going into the dark wood rather than reaching for the tops of mountains. Most often the way out is the way in or the way down and my task is to be there alongside the patient as we uncover and discover together. I am aware that many people may come to psychosynthesis as a way of personal growth and self-development and in this they reach for mountain tops. However, it is much more Assagioli's 'psychoanalytical phase' (Assagioli, 2022, p. 142) rather than the self-development phase that brings people to my door.

I travel north towards winter while leafing through the *Psicosintesi* magazine and come across the Assagioli for the Future article that speaks about a psychology for the future, "an even higher Forth psychology, transpersonal, transhuman, centred in the cosmos rather than on human needs and interests, transcending the human condition". (Assagioli, 2023, p. 62) For a few years now I have been wondering about what would influence Assagioli's thinking if he were alive now. What new thoughts would come into the world through him? He suggested that modern physics would inform such a new force in psychology and specifically the physics of energy. This

is precisely where postmodern philosophical thinking has placed itself in its inclusion of relational quantum physics theory. Is this then part of the archaeology of the future? Am I hearing Assagioli answer my question regarding what would influence his thinking now?

It also takes me back to the beginning of this article and Donna Haraway who suggested we are living in a time that 'is made of ongoing multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with in times that remain at stake, in precarious times, in which the world is not finished, and the sky has not fallen – yet. We are at stake to each other (Haraway, 2016, p.55). She suggested that these multispecies stories and practices involve the human and more than human world in which everything is linked to something, nothing is independent and in which the human is no longer at the centre. Here perhaps is the future psychology Assagioli was writing about. Here is the situated knowledge that arises through interconnectedness, an unfolding process of discovery.

Postscript Scotland December 2023

It is the middle of December, and I am in my consultation room in Edinburgh. I have turned the heating up and am waiting for the first patient of the day to arrive. The past couple of months I have tried to summarise my thoughts about this extremely rich and inspiring experience of the 10th International Gathering in Florence. The theme of Freedom springs back to mind and I am grateful to have been part of this. The freedom to dip in and out of what was on offer during the event and the freedom to find outer and inner space for new thoughts to arrive. I hope it will give the reader a little flavour of what it was like for me. I wish to extend my gratitude to Francesco Viglienghi, Donatella Randazzo, and all the Gruppo Alle Fonti for making this experience possible.

Grazie Mille a tutti.

Theo Dijkman

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THE MEANING OF LIFE

Translated by Achille Cattaneo / Gordon Leonard Symons

*Did I asked you, creator,
To create me as a man, from clay,
did I ask you
to promote me from the darkness?*

In the Western world, human beings consider only the world of matter to be real and are more likely to investigate the external world than the internal one. Modern man, so sure of himself when he has to act in the tangible world, generally behaves like a frightened child when he has to face the dark abyss of his inner world.

We live our daily lives thinking only about the present and the concrete problems of life, but the question still hovers: why live? What's the point?

The answers could be many, influenced by the cultural and religious context in which each person was born and lives.

For some, life is a commandment. God has given us life, and we must live it according to his laws.

The behaviour of the individual believer ranges from fundamentalism - to killing those who do not follow the only truth, ours - to formal faith, we believe because we have been taught since childhood but our behavior is often in contrast with religious teachings. We tend, at times, to adapt the doctrine a little, accepting what attracts us most and forgetting what is less in conformity with our thinking.

Faith can give meaning to the lives of some, even if religion is not enough for everyone to give meaning to existence.

Dissatisfied with the religious experience with which we have been educated and from which we cannot get satisfactory answers, we seek a new spirituality by turning our attention to other cultures, Eastern disciplines in particular. In recent years in Italy there has been an increased interest in various forms of Buddhism, often adapted to our cultural background, some of which result in the new-age phenomenon, a vast movement that includes various psychological and spiritual themes. In some cases it happens in some cases that those who have

joined it become subjugated by it, since its promoters take advantage of the deep need for new values, of the search for greater inner well-being.

Ideology is another strong driving force to live with meaning, in this case secular, where we would like to change the world through a political idea, according to our ideals of justice or other values learned and perceived as our own.

The defense of the environment, the and social justice, regardless of how each of us interprets them it, move great vital energies in us.

More than anything, we adopt as true and immutable the patterns of life predefined by the society in which we live. We accept them without any particular reflection, without asking ourselves how we make the problem of making sense of how we are living, and whether what we do is right or wrong for us.

We live as a cog of in the economic system, working hard to try to improve our social position, building a family and having children, whose education can occupy us for many years during which we are so busy that we have no time to think about anything else.

We let ourselves be overwhelmed by life's routines totally losing touch with ourselves and the world and the possibility of understanding ourselves.

We seek security in our bank account and from our properties and possessions, but we are unable to fill the sense of inner emptiness, which we would not know how to fill.

Despite being born in the part of the world that should consider itself lucky, the country where throngs of migrants would like to live and where they believe they would be happy, existential distress is very common. From news stories and statistical surveys, the use of antidepressant drugs in Europe is on the rise, and we hear of people who, while living in seemingly affluent conditions, show signs of distress, imbalance and escape from reality, judging life meaningless.

The pursuit of success and money, the new idols of Western societies, even when realized, conveys such a feeling of dissatisfaction and lack of meaning of

existence that we fall into pessimism and nihilism, becoming harsh, indifferent and cynical with everyone. Gain becomes an end in itself, but such a suprapersonal goal creates in modern man a sense of the absurdity of existence, of emptiness - a perception of precariousness and bewilderment in the face of the mystery of death that we tend to remove from awareness.

If existence has no other authentic and human purpose, there is nothing left but to indulge in the pleasures of life as our only goal, and to satisfy all our instincts as much

as possible to the extreme.

We stunt ourselves in some vice or game to try to feel at least a momentary thrill, or we work and keep ourselves as busy as possible to keep from thinking, to appease an unconscious sense of hopelessness.

We always hope for a better future life, but over time nothing changes. No matter how hard we try not to think about it, the sense of dissatisfaction is always there waiting for us and never goes away.

We dream of reaching a state where no one can disturb us and where we experience eternal happiness, but there



are no definitive goals to be conquered in whatever field we find ourselves acting. When we reach a goal, whatever it may be, we will first experience a state of fulfillment destined, however, to turn into restlessness that will cause us to desire to go further. Every moment of our lives represents an evolutionary phase. We are not today what we were as children or in adolescence, and we do not remain the same even when we reach adulthood.

“Happiness,” or rather self-actualization, is not something definitive and static achieved by rare and fortunate individuals, but can be defined as a transitional stage where we are more authentic, more open to new experiences and more independent of the influences of the dominant culture. We implement our potential more fruitfully and feel in control of our destiny. Having reached a goal, we will feel that we must continue our quest further, guided by “divine dissatisfaction,” the continual search for our true identity that is always evolving, never allowing us to feel completely fulfilled and pushing us to progress further and further until the end of our days.

“As man evolves, he becomes more aware of his own powers: strength, intelligence, technical skill, while in parallel he develops a dark but intense sense that there are greater powers latent in man that he must realize (a divine dissatisfaction).”

Human beings, having satisfied instinctive and conservation needs, are driven by other needs that transcend them. When we are able to reach our deepest parts, values emerge independent of the cultural context in which we live and the education we have received. And it is these resources that we must also draw on in our daily lives and in our inner journey of growth and awareness. If we free ourselves from habitual ways of thinking, customs, external influences and the way we are used to seeing ourselves, we find that we are free and are able to ascribe meaning and value to life.

We possess a unique genetic imprint, different from all other human beings who have ever existed for all

over time. As unique in the world, only we can fully implement the talents we have received.

We are all beings in power with all the characteristics to be able to become who we are. We possess a natural tendency toward more complete development, toward becoming all the complexity of which we are capable. We already possess all the internal resources for our complete realization; it is a matter of learning about them and harnessing them.

“Until our last breath we are responsible for how we live, for the use we make of the ‘talents’ we have been entrusted with in the face of life.”

We must be ready and make our own contribution to ourselves, to the growth of humanity, to all living beings and to the entire physical world, allowing ourselves to fully express all our personal human potential.

THE TREE OF LIFE... IT IS, OR RATHER, IT WAS HERE, IN ROME!

Translated by Achille Cattaneo / Laura Rodighiero

This story begins around mid-August 2022, in the Rione Prati di Castello in Rome, in a street, Via Pompeo Magno, near Piazza dei Quiriti and, a little further on, the famous Via Germanico which for several decades was the historic Headquarters of Psychosynthesis in Rome.

One day in that hot month of August I found myself passing on this street as I had never seen it before, almost completely without cars, as if we had been thrown back in time, to the end of the '800 when the Rione began to be built. In short, I was walking in a completely depopulated street.

My eyes met an unexpected sight, a tree I had never noticed before; and how much beauty there was in its appearing so large, luxuriant, full of branches and leaves. Yes! A beautiful tree but of abnormal height, definitely much shorter than the other trees on that street. In short, a "dwarfed tree".

Looking at it more closely, I was even more amazed by its *cracked trunk*, by its being so low, and not because mother nature had thus made it from the beginning, rather because it had been *wounded* by external events and I can't say how long ago!

Although I have always lived in that Rione, and passed through that same road innumerable times, I had never noticed, or rather I had never stopped to observe that tree in all its details, and how it had been reduced to that condition. I would never have noticed it if not for the complete lack of cars on that stretch of road!

The tree had certainly been in that condition for a very long time, perhaps for a few decades, and now, looking at it carefully, I would never have guessed what and how from that *wound* it would then have been able to produce and give us: the birth of a new tree.

I was really amazed, and I thought that that *surviving* tree had a much deeper purpose, namely to be, for those who did notice it, an example of the Force of Life, since

notwithstanding the heavy sufferings it had borne and which had left it practically dead, it would then germinate a Life.

It is appropriate to say that it *rose again* - and it is no coincidence that all this happened right in front of and next to a Church, that of San Gioacchino, my Parish! And at that moment, this comparison occurred to me: just as Jesus died and rose to new Life, so this tree too had undergone a transformation, still remaining there to begin a new Life, to be seen by everyone, to be contemplated and to bear witness to Nature's miracle, but also to make us think and teach us something.

I stopped for a long time to look at it, it made me think how in the face of negative situations that make us die inside, something new and positive can be born and help us to get stronger.

After all, what I have described is nothing more than being one side of the same coin, where of course, we do not want to get wounded and almost destroyed; on the contrary, we would like our world to grow only *roses and flowers...* but in real life this does not happen, and behold, from all the negativity and suffering, something definitely and completely new arises, something that is unexpected, positive and perhaps even more beautiful and constructive!

Observing the tree was like looking beyond the present, beyond what happens to us here and now. As for that grain of wheat that fell to the earth and by its death will bear fruit, through its transformation we'll discover something that otherwise we would never have been able to see and experience.

Without that loss or that deep *wound*, we would not have been able to appreciate how great and immense is the Life that has been given us and that we live day by day: it's like opening a window and looking out into a new world.

That ugly, imperfect something that we carry inside us and that, as we feel, has led us to an inner death, and



therefore to the wish to bury it, can instead be a strength, and can be transformed into something valuable and beautiful. We can thus love that wounded and often destroyed part of ours, that may be hidden but still exist, is there to be seen, not to be negated, just as we now see this broken tree, its trunk quite empty.

This tree teaches me and all of us not to hide that wounded, ugly and imperfect part, not to be ashamed of it, but to love it, to always have trust, to trust ourselves, in spite of everything!

Although we live continuously in our ups and downs, it teaches us that even from wounds beautiful things can be born and bring joy, that only from these strong experiences we can be reborn to a new Life, alive full of love and beauty that we can give others, just as this wonderful **Tree of Life** is now doing, a being to be safeguarded and protected.

But that's not all!

Here comes the second chapter of my story, and it is really a story from *one transformation to another*, because after almost a year, in July 2023, on the decision of the Forestali and Agronomi of the Comune of Rome, for safety reasons, people in charge decided to cut down the tree. After all, this decision was probably inevitable and could not be prevented, despite my efforts to prolong its life and therefore let it survive!

Quite clearly the tree was for me an example of Life:

from an apparent death it was *resurrected*, and over time, and in these decades, notwithstanding having faced several trials, bad weather with intense rains and even very strong winds which, among other things, in the same Rione have detached large branches and even completely knocked down several different trees, leaving my own tree whole and luxuriant.

Perhaps its peculiar height did preserve it, giving us a foliage almost at eye level, which before the wild pruning in November 2022 was the envy of all the other trees in the street and the neighborhood! But despite everything, and even after that pruning, it managed to re-emerge and create, albeit to a reduced extent, a new and thick foliage.

Yes, its felling gave me a deep pain, like losing someone near and dear!

That tree in its life has experienced a handicap, namely that of having been a large tree and, having, I don't know when and how, suffered a decapitation or rather a wound such as to remain a dwarf tree.

Yet it's in that hollowed out portion of the trunk that the real strength is to be found, the strength which allowed it to miraculously live again, and show the world an incredible strength that allowed it, so to speak, to be reborn from its own ashes.

On the day the tree was felled I was there and watched

every phase of the operation; I greeted my tree with a prayer, thanked it for the beauty and the example of life that it had given to everyone without distinction, even to those who in all these years had failed to notice its miracle! It was like a flower that opens up to the world, gives all its beauty, its colors, its scents quite freely, without sparing itself; and after a while it dies.

But that same morning, I saw something else still!

I watched from some distance, with what tenderness a lady I did not know at all, stopped and approaching the tree, put her hand for a few moments on that trunk, whispering or reciting something; and then, as she was about to leave, taking a snapshot of it. And I considered how my tree must have been an example and an inspiration for so many others beside me!

The magnificence of Nature, which teaches, gives and bears witness to how something that we discard, because it is imperfect, unhealthy, is instead full and bearing values and beauty.

This tree has let us see all its imperfections and fragility, showing itself and saying to those who were responsive, quite freely and silently, *“love me for what I am and you will discover how much beauty and strength is contained in that wound of mine, so deep!”*



BACK TO THE CENTRE. THE CENTER, WHICH IS NOT AN ABSTRACT ENTITY, BUT A GROUP OF PEOPLE



Translated by Achille Cattaneo / Gordon Leonard Symons

I think I have taken part, in different capacities, in at least thirty members' meetings, not all equally interesting, but almost all useful for bringing members together, or at least pushing them to keep in touch with each other.

However, today's assembly, is a little different from the others for me: I realized it thinking about it more than usual, and now I would like to try to explain the thread of my reasoning.

As many of you already know, in June last year a TAC (Computer Assisted Tomography) - which I underwent to try to find a remedy for the bad Covid that had broken out on my way back from a national board in Florence - revealed the presence of a small lump in my right lung. It took a few months to discover the nature of the nodule, but when it became clear that it was most likely a malignant tumor, to be surgically removed, I decided that the whole process of hospitalization and treatment, with the related commitments, made it necessary for me to resign as director of this Center, and I informed our board of this. I must say with sincerity that I was (almost) moved by the reactions of the entire board, whose members proposed that I should not resign, but that I should remain, released as much as possible from personal commitments, through my replacement by the board itself: a kind of multiple management, waiting for events to unfold.

And so it happened.

I was able to devote my attention, mine and that of my daughter Loretta, to the demanding problems of

my health, and the board followed the progress of the Center, reporting to me from time to time.

But the passage of time and the persistence of this situation has led to some consequences that I did not foresee, on the nature and quality of the relations between me, the board, and the Center, that is, all the members. In essence, I remained formally the director, but very far away, so far away that I was, perhaps, considered absent, (almost) definitively.

The board, therefore, perceived itself as completely headless, and tried to equip itself precisely for this new state of affairs. Probably I also focused my commitments and my thoughts very much on my health and little, on the other hand, on the life of our center. The lack of a reference figure, who would assume the effective direction, and the related responsibilities, had, almost without me realizing it, projected all of us towards the situation very well described by Fellini's beautiful film "Prova di orchestra" (Orchestra Rehearsal). My attitude, therefore, had to be changed and it has been changed, provoking the reaction, a little surprised, a little disoriented, a little annoyed, from the members of the board. I thought of discussing the case at today's meeting, but, thinking about it calmly, I concluded that today's meeting, as it presented itself to me, smacked little of a shareholders' meeting and a lot, instead, of a first meeting between subjects who are little known to each other. In other words, I discovered that I had lost sight of the Center, whose life I had followed very little. Undoubtedly my main responsibility.

Today, therefore, here and now, I have decided to get to know the Center, which is not an abstract entity, but a

group of people, who have chosen to intertwine a stretch of their life trajectory with that authentic experiential manual, which we call Psychosynthesis. And above all, I have decided that my future will be one of variable geometry: if, as it seems, the last future medical examinations – the next PET (Positron Emission Tomography) on November 6 confirm the clear improvement in my health, I will fully resume my contacts with the Center, without any more de-responsible delegations, but with a constant commitment and as assiduous a frequency as possible. Also because, in my opinion, the various groups that operate in the Center cannot be considered autonomous entities, being involved, instead, in projects and initiatives whose diversity constitutes a richness, if, however, there

remains a strong link with the one and only common reference to the teachings of Assagioli. If, otherwise, my future is wrapped in gowns and pajamas, my resignation is already ready within me.

This is the pact that I am making with the Centre tonight. On the basis of this pact, I invite you, all of you, to resume our common journey at a good pace, and I leave the floor to those who will illustrate the program to you, for the drafting of which, not always calm, I must and want to publicly thank the members of the board. Good luck, best wishes from the scouts and, tonight, also mine for all of us.

Vito D'Ambrosio

*Magistrate - Trainer of the Institute of Psychosynthesis
Director Ancona Center.*

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Meeting - Centre of Ancona

MOTHERTREE

Proudly at the top of the meadow, proudly facing the stars, the tree stands tall and opens up its foliage, spreading it to the air and the wind, offering itself to the sun's fire, powerful.

Among trunks and branches it's hiding, in the thick of the rustling forest; there its branches intertwine with those of its tall companions, there it pushes itself to seek space and light, shielding itself among its brothers, hoping for support, for help.

Thus, the days chase each other, and light plays with darkness; high up clouds chase each other and then fray

and disappear, the rain comes down and sinks into the grass and leaves, again and again and again.

But hear! Something small and new is knocking at your trunk – something fragile and nevertheless vibrant with life, with stories and tales not yet written and thought about.

What shall I do, shall I allow it to put down roots next to my trunk? Should I allow it to reveal the forms of its power, to open its voice in song, to intertwine his story, a new story, with mine?

Should I give him some of my air, of my space? Should I retract, and allow it to grow?

*Alive I'm preserving
the sap running among these branches of mine
boundless twigs, rootlets,
and laughters of the wind whistling
most tenderly at dawn,
and to spin the crystalline ray
of relaxed passions, luminous
banks, dews and valleys, and the eternal
coming back of sister moon, so clear.*

*Alone, I hold
of so much heaven, the grace and the pride.*

*The wind throws me a little fervent
nocturnal seed, tired of wandering.*

*Stay, nod my branches,
stay, rest, stay...
I will here be a womb and a home,
and a light to guide your search.*

*And perhaps you will want to tell me tales
of old and new glances, in payment,
and desires and all the reasons
never already shouted to the world.
That will be enough,
I feel that it's enough for me, nay that it's much.*

*"If then I too shall be proud
with branches and foliage, will you
let me have space, and have sky?
Will you shrink back?"*



EXPERIENCE

I recall to my mind and heart my life as I am living it today.

I listen to myself: which tree do I recognize myself in, today, now? In the one who opens up free and proud, offering herself to the wind and the world, or in that other tree who seeks shelter and support in the thick of the woods, trying to open a path towards the sky and the light among all the other trees, companions yet in competition for nourishment , for air?

I listen to myself. I have found my own way of being, perhaps with some difficulty, with some renunciation: but stable, becalmed.

Then, unexpectedly, a little seed comes, something strange and new: and maybe it may seem small and fragile, yet in this tiny seed we sense an enormous power, we feel that it could become something great - but what it could become we can't know – the joy of a friendly presence, or perhaps an enemy, perhaps a competitor, who knows. Will it be a company and exchange nourishment - will it steal my sap and hide the sky?

What will we do? It is up to us to choose whether to give it shelter and nourishment, now that he is fragile, or chase him away and let the frost harden and burn it.

Let's try to reach out with a bough, to touch the seed, and let's listen: what shall it tell us?

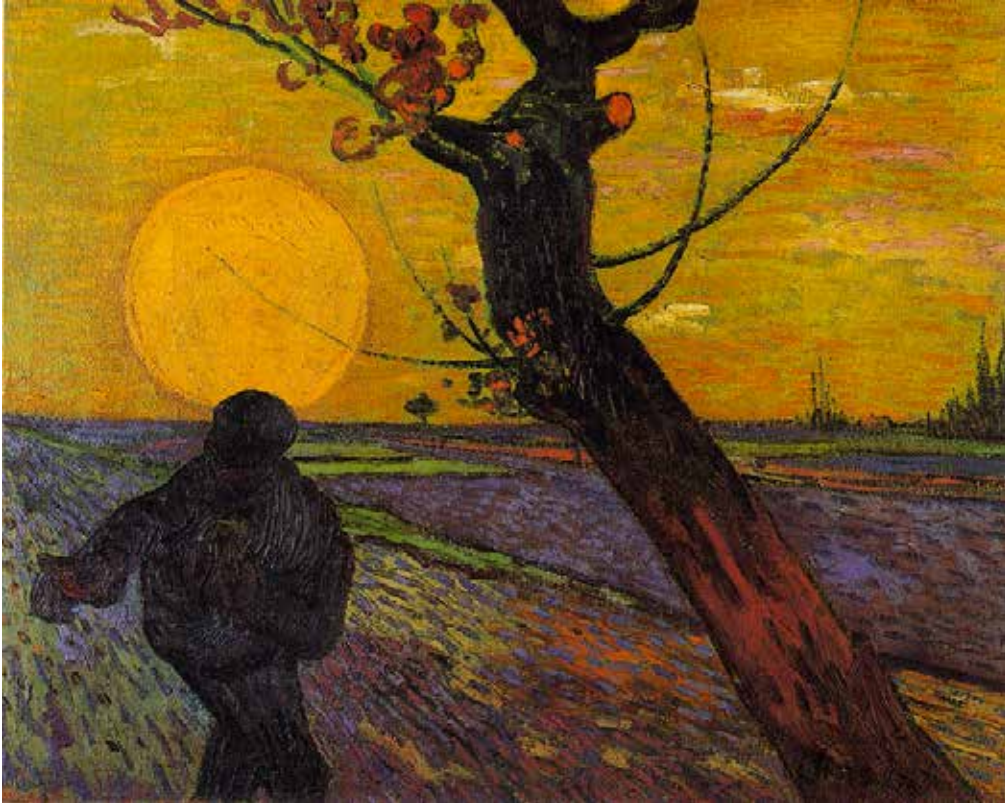
Does it ask something of us, and if so, what? And what could we give it? What would we ask of it in exchange, what could we ever expect?

Can we, shall we trust it? And feed it our sap? Allow it to grow large and tall, taller than ourselves perhaps?

What kind of story will the tree tell, what kind of story the seed?

And what if we were that other tree, the one in which now we don't see ourselves? Let's listen to ourselves, let's listen to its tale: is it the same tale, or a different one? Who knows...

POEM



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STILL

When I'll turn away
from myself, to live
the silence of the shadow,
the thunder of light,
the prayer of the grass
and the sun,
the sun that frees itself
in the gift
you will be able to find me
in a dream,
to laugh together
still,
like two youngsters.

Sergio Guarino

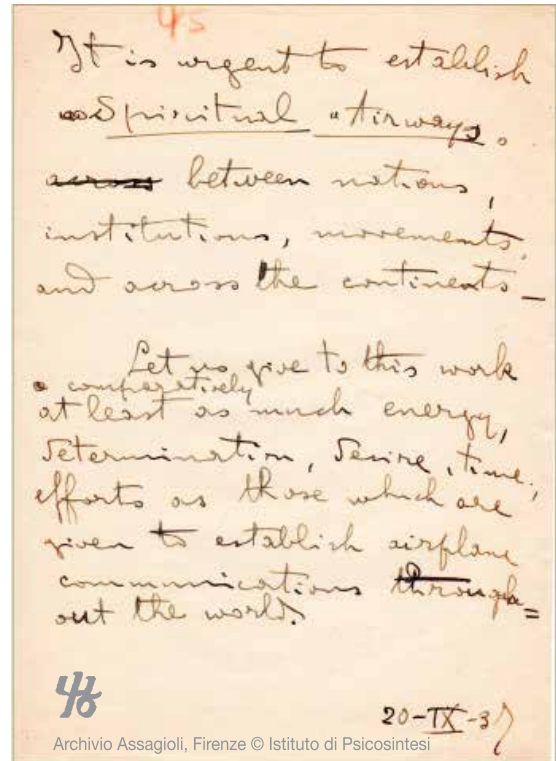
NOTICE BOARD

WORLD PSYCHOSYNTHESIS DAY SEPTEMBER 20

*It is urgent to establish Spiritual "Airways"
between nations, institutions, movements
and across the continents.*

*Let us give to this work comparatively at least as
much energy, determination, desire, time, efforts
as those which are given to establish airplane
communications throughout the world.*

Roberto Assagioli



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NEW WEBSITE OF PSYCHOSYNTHESIS IS ONLINE



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XV INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS



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THIRST AND THE WELLSPRING
Transpersonal itineraries

25 - 28 October 2024
Abano Terme - Venice

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On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Roberto Assagioli's death, the Istituto di Psicosintesi and its Venice Center are organizing the **XV International Congress** of the Istituto di Psicosintesi that will take place at the Alexander Hotel in Abano Terme, near Padua, from 25 to 27 October 2024, and will end with a Post-Conference and a Symposium on Roberto Assagioli on 28 October 2024, in Venice.

You can find all the information on the Congress:

<https://www.psicosintesi.it/attivita-Istituto/calendario-Istituto/thirst-and-the-wellspring-transpersonal-itineraries>

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